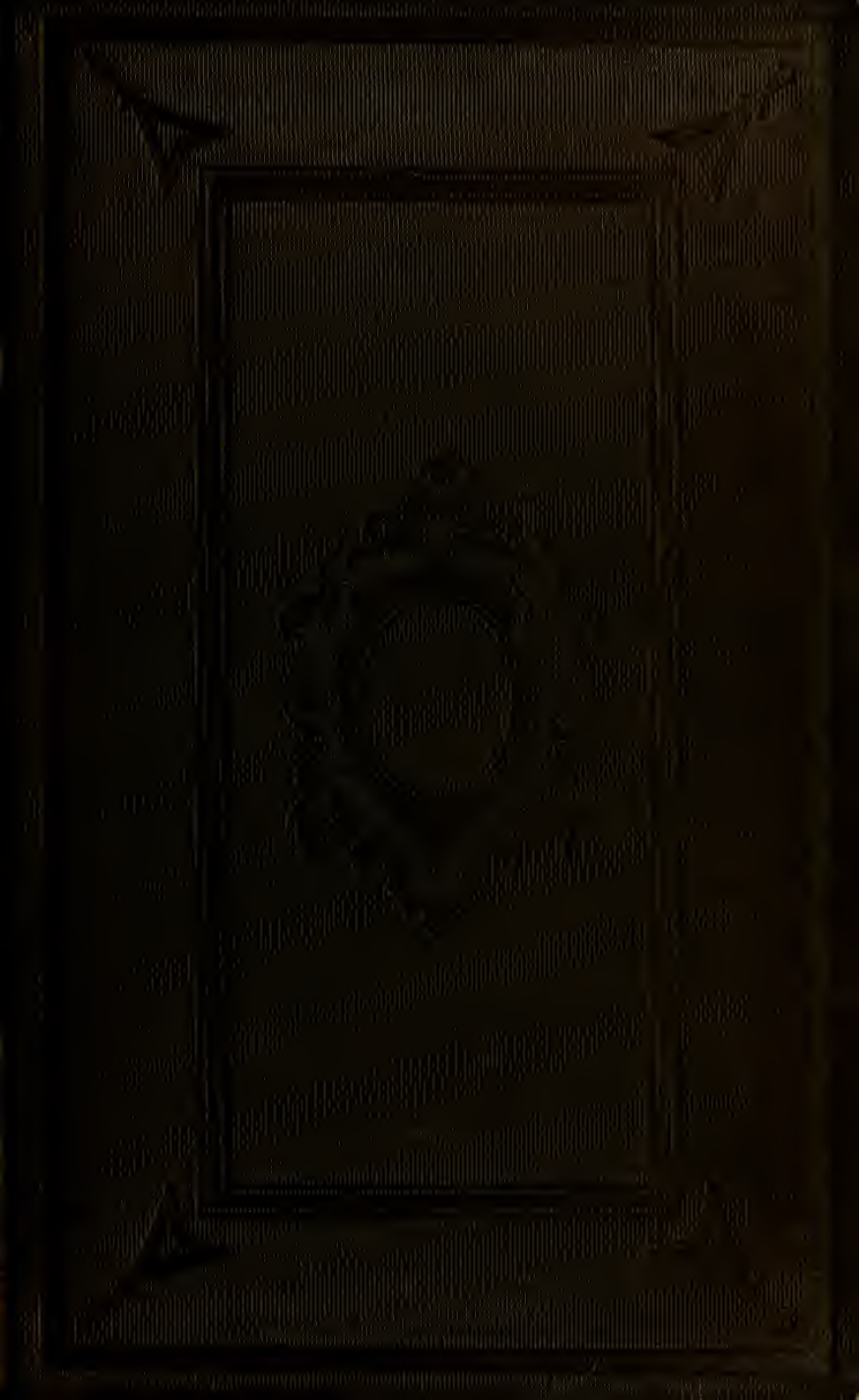

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CHRISTIAN ORDINANCES

AND

ECCLESIASTICAL OBSERVANCES

RECONSIDERED;

IN WHICH, AMONG OTHER THINGS,

THE RESTRICTED COMMUNION OF BAPTISTS IS DEMONSTRATED TO BE ANTI-SCRIPTURAL.

BY THE

REV. SAMUEL WILLS, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF "THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA;" "SCRIPTURE EXPOSITIONS FOR EVERY MORNING AND EVENING THROUGHOUT THE YEAR," ETC.

"Prove all things, hold fast that which is good."—1 THESS. v. 21.

NEW YORK: PUBLISHED BY M. W. DODD, BROADWAY;
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1854.

PREFACE.

A WORD or two shall suffice to introduce the following pages to the notice of the reading Christian public. The subjects treated of are of vast importance to the prosperity of the church of Christ: how far they have been expounded to illustrate that importance is another thing. The writer fears his task is very imperfectly accomplished, though feeling a consciousness that he has not "handled the word of God deceitfully."

This little treatise would probably never have courted the notice of the Christian community, had it not been that the author's sentiment upon the subject of open communion has been so freely used against his extended usefulness in preaching the gospel of Christ. It was never his intention to do more than declare his conviction that, in the New Testament, open communion was "*a self-evident principle.*" Though a baptist, and allowing that ordinance the full importance it demands in the Christian dispensation, he did not feel it to be a paramount object in his ministry, or the ground for separating from other Christians at the Lord's table.

The author fully believes that he has demonstrated the principle of restricted communion with baptists to be anti-scriptural; thus proving that the error concerning communion is not with him, but with those who proscribe his views.

The subjects treated of in this work have led the writer to expose some departures from the principles of the New Testament by perhaps all denominations—it is hoped not in an unchristian spirit, but with the earnest desire that all may be more anxious to take God's book for a guide.

The work appears in seven parts: the first is a design to show John's baptism to be no Christian ordinance; the second, the nature of Christian baptism, &c.; the third, the institute of the Lord's Supper, &c.; the fourth, the true nature of a Christian church, and that all prerequisites to membership but faith are of man's invention, and anti-scriptural; the fifth, the contrast of a New-Testament organized society with human organizations under the name of "churches;" the sixth, the baptist denomination in its rise and progress, &c.; the seventh, the features of restricted and free communion in contrast, and the results in their bearing upon society.

That the reader may "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good," is the prayer of

THE AUTHOR.

NEW YORK, *December*, 1852.

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PART I.

JOHN'S BAPTISM.

SECTION I. — HISTORY OF HIS BIRTH.

The advent of the Messiah was the constant burden of prophetic announcement; and there was as much anxiety to know the exact period of his coming, on the part of the prophets themselves, as on that of the people.

The prophetic revelations opened by degrees a vast amount of information on this subject; and, by a succession of communications, the expectation of the event was constantly agitating the minds of the people for about four thousand years.

It was revealed by the prophets that there should be, immediately preceding the coming

of the Lord, a notable person to go before his face, to prepare his way. This individual was sufficiently described to be known, when appearing, as the harbinger of the Lord.

The prophecies having all been delivered relating to the coming of the holy and just One, with a circumstantial minuteness in which nothing was omitted which bore upon his character or appearance, or the time, place, and circumstances connected with his advent; it remained, after the retirement of Malachi from the labors of his office, for the people to expect, in the next prophet who appeared among them, a messenger to announce the speedy coming of "*the desire of all nations.*"

The long succession of Jewish prophets having passed away, an interim of about four hundred years rolled on, and there was no other manifestation of the prophetic gift. The canon of the Old-Testament Scriptures had closed up with these announcements: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in," &c. (Mal. 3: 1). "Remember ye the law

of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4: 4–6).

All, therefore, was waiting for the ushering in of the harbinger of the Messiah; every circumstance of ancient prediction seemed to gather to a point of time then close at hand. The prophetic stars shone in the firmament, but the light they reflected was the borrowed rays from the "Sun of Righteousness," and pointed back to him; from these the predictions were returning as so many lines from the circumference of a circle to the centre, and the whole body of light and truth in revelation was drawn to one focus, concentrating in that period in the history of the world.

It was announced that John Baptist was now to appear. The circumstances attending his birth were of a peculiar character, as if designed by God to draw more than common attention, that in this individual might be seen the true

"prophet of the Highest," to "go before the face of the Lord." His parents were both well stricken in years, and childless. Zacharias his father was a priest; and while officiating in the temple at the time of incense, when the whole multitude of the people were praying without, an angel from heaven announced to him the future birth of a son, and acquainted him with the office and character he was designed to sustain. The name by which he should be called was also made known, the holiness and abstinence of the life he should lead, and likewise that he should be filled with the Holy Ghost from his birth. The event was calculated to give Zacharias joy and gladness, as many were to rejoice at his birth. Moreover, the angel added: "Many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1: 16, 17). But Zacharias was slow to believe all this, and for his unbelief he was struck dumb. The people marvelled without because he tarried so long in the temple; but when he

came out, and could not speak, they understood that he had seen a vision.

John was born according to the angel's announcement, and, when he was circumcised on the eighth day, there was a disposition to call him after the name of his father, but Elisabeth said, "Not so, but he shall be called John;" and they made signs to his father to know how he would have him called—when Zacharias wrote, "His name is John" *(the grace* or *mercy of Jehovah)*. Hereupon his tongue was loosed, and he spake and praised God.

The spirit of inspiration had subsided for four hundred years, but now it filled the father of John. He broke forth under the powerful influence of the Holy Ghost, saying: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would

grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." Then turning to his infant son, he exclaimed: "Thou child shalt be called the prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1: 68–79).

The wonder of the people, at what they had seen and heard, led to much excitement in the whole neighborhood—so that it is recorded: "Fear came upon all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill-country of Judea. And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, 'What manner of child shall this be?' And the hand of the Lord was with him."

SECTION II. — THE HARBINGER OF JESUS CHRIST.

THE exciting incidents in the history of Zacharias and the birth of his son were of a nature to act favorably for the reception of John as a prophet whenever he should make his public appearance, and until then not much has been recorded of his life.

He was much retired, seeking seclusion from society. "He was in the deserts," in those parts of Judea which were little inhabited. Separated from noise, riot, dissipation, and public temptations, he had opportunities of cultivating that sanctity of mind, through communion with God, so highly adapted for the public career which was to follow in his history. He continued in the deserts "till the day of his showing unto Israel," when he entered on his prophetic office, as it were by inauguration, at the age of thirty years.

He appeared in the wilderness of Judea as the prophet to "go before the face of the Lord," answering his announcement by Isaiah: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in

the desert a highway for our God.' Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Isa. 40: 3, 4).

It will be seen in this prophetic allusion to John, that the imagery is taken from the custom of eastern monarchs, who, whenever they entered upon an expedition or took a journey, especially through desert and untraversed countries, sent harbingers before them to prepare all things for their passage; also pioneers to open the passes, to level the ways, and to remove all impediments. John Baptist calls himself the pioneer of the Messiah, whose business was to call with a loud voice upon the people who were dwelling in the deserts, and to level and prepare the roads by which the king was about to march.

The Jewish church was that desert country to which John was sent to announce the coming of the Messiah. It was at that time destitute of all religious cultivation, and of the spirit and practice of piety. John was sent to prepare the way of the Lord by preaching repentance. The

desert is therefore to be considered as affording a proper emblem of the rude state of the Jewish church, which is the true wilderness meant by the prophet, in which John was to prepare the way of the promised Messiah.

The character, appearance, and office of John, answer exactly to the predictions concerning the one who was to go before the face of the Lord to prepare his way. He again and again declared that this was his true character and office. "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as saith the prophet Esaias." Nor does the evidence rest upon his own testimony only; the evangelists have been particular to confirm the truth. "This is he," says Matthew in his gospel, "that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'" Jesus, too, bore evidence to this character of John, by saying, "This is he of whom it is written, 'Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee,'" to which the Saviour adds: "Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of woman, there hath not risen a greater

than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, *this is Elias*, which was for to come." Again, we find the disciples asking Jesus, as he came down from the mount, "Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?" To this Jesus answered: "Elias truly shall first come and restore all things. But I say unto you, that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed." . . . . "Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist."

It seemed necessary to make allusions to John in the way in which he was to appear before the world according to prophetic announcement, as it must have direct bearing upon the other duties of his life, which we have to consider. We have, therefore, as briefly as the circumstances would admit, noticed him as the messenger going before the face of the Lord, as the "prophet of the Highest." This will lead

us, in the next place, to observe particularly his public ministry, accompanied with the religious rite of baptism.

SECTION III. — HIS CALL TO THE MINISTRY OF HIS OFFICE.

JOHN remained in privacy, though perhaps fully conscious of the end for which he was born, until the Lord called him forth into public life. "The word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness." He was slow to move till he had that word, but was prompt to act at the command of the Lord. "And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."

Everything in his appearance, his manner, and his doctrine, tended to excite a solemnity and seriousness in the minds of his audience. He was clothed like the ancient prophets, with a rough garment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his waist. His food was such as the wilderness yielded, "locusts and wild honey." His address partook of the fervor of his soul, nothing vacillating or pusillanimous, but

was calculated to strike awe into the minds of the people.

He received his commission from God. Both his preaching, and the rite of baptism, which he administered to the penitent, were given him from heaven. As one that feared not man, nor regarded his favor or applause, he discharged the duties of his office in the wilderness of Judea, calling upon all who came within the reach of his voice, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." God was about to visit his people; the dispensation of grace to be administered by Emmanuel was opening upon them; and it was needful and essential to their receiving "the author and finisher of salvation," that they who had so far departed from the sincerity of a pious and godlike nation, should manifest signs of contrition, and thereby be a people prepared for the Lord.

John, in preaching repentance to the Jewish people, was engaged in the same character of ministry which preceding prophets had discharged. The people were constantly revolting from the living God, and more or less the doctrine of repentance was a prominent theme in all their ministry. But, in addition, John had

to bear tidings which others had not; for though they proclaimed a coming Messiah, yet he was not near at hand: but John, in his commission, had to declare that the time had arrived when the promise should be fulfilled — "The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

When the Lord gave intimation to his servants that he was about to appear among his people by any special manifestation, they were generally called upon to sanctify themselves, and particularly if they had been defiled by any iniquity. It was in this way they were prepared for the Lord, in the ceremonial sanctification of their persons, and in humility before God. The sanctification of people was by the washing of water; and, in this particular, though John had his commission directly from heaven, it evidently bore the marks of those ceremonial observances under the law, when the people were brought to repentance, and were purified by water, upon the intimation that God was about to visit them.

There could be no reception for the people into the kingdom of heaven, when the Messiah should appear among them, did they not repent and forsake their sins. John considered all per-

sons, without exception, as in a state of depravity, guilt, and condemnation; and as he called upon them to repent, many became contrite, and those who professed deep sorrow of soul were baptized, thereby publicly acknowledging their pollution, their need of spiritual washing, and determination to abandon every evil way.

The ministry of John, attached to the reports which had gone forth concerning the circumstances of his birth, attracted multitudes to him in the wilderness where he was preaching and baptizing. There was doubtless every class of character going out of Jerusalem, and the cities round about the wilderness, to attend on his ministry, and to be baptized of him. And as it was his grand object to fulfil his mission, he was evidently greatly concerned "to prepare a people for the Lord." Questioning as he did, therefore, the sincerity of the multitude, who were eager to submit to the baptism he administered, with stern rebuke he thus addressed them: "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, 'We have Abraham to our father;' for I say unto you, that God is

able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the tree; every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire."

His words sank deep into the hearts of many; they became concerned to know and do their duty: numbers manifested a legal repentance, and some, we may believe, a godly sorrow, that needed not to be repented of, all of whom were baptized confessing their sins, believing in the speedy appearing of the Saviour, and the visible manifestation of the kingdom of heaven, or the dispensation of the grace of God by Jesus Christ.

SECTION IV. — THE DISPENSATION UNDER WHICH JOHN MINISTERED.

Now it is evident that, when John commenced his ministry, he knew nothing of the person of the Saviour. Though they were connected by family relationship, and both mothers could congratulate each other prior to the birth of either, yet in the providence of God they were kept apart, so that there was no meeting or inter-

course. Nothing had appeared of the kingdom of heaven—it was only announced as at hand; yet John was fulfilling his ministry in baptizing unto repentance. While, then, the public appearance of Christ in the ministry of his own grace remained to be revealed, and the kingdom of heaven was only proclaimed as being at hand, and not in actual existence, and while John was only a messenger to prepare the way of the Lord, we ask, to what dispensation did John's ministry belong? It is self-evident that every feature of it bore a striking resemblance to the Jewish ceremonial observances. It was no new thing for repentance and purification to be enjoined upon the people, and John's ministry only differed from what had gone before, inasmuch as that it heralded the approach of *the holy and just One.*

John was a Jewish prophet, and the last of the prophets. The rite of baptism which he administered as peculiar to himself (in which all who were baptized were enjoined to believe on Him who should come after him), was the last of the instituted ceremonies of the Jewish religion, reserved especially for John to introduce and administer. It was the baptism emphati-

cally declared to be from heaven, and was superseded by Christian baptism.

There has been considerable perplexity in the minds of those who have written concerning John as a prophet, to know whether he is to come between the Jewish and Christian dispensations, distinct in himself and office from either, or to occupy a place among the Jewish prophets, or be considered a prophet of the kingdom of heaven—the Christian dispensation.

It requires no keenness of discernment to understand that this perplexity has arisen from the desire to endeavor to find a place for the messenger of the Lord to suit the opinions which men may wish to establish. Cast away these conflicting notions; leave the prophet to find his own true and proper place assigned him by Heaven; come with teachable dispositions to what the Scriptures declare, and there can be no doubt remaining.

It seems to be a matter passing strange that men—and learned men too—have ventured to create a nook for him between two dispensations, an idea absurd in the extreme. The Scriptures nowhere give the most distant intimation of a break between the two dispensations, with

a link to bring the two together. The one flows on into the other as the waters run on into the ocean, and we are not prepared to countenance or allow for one moment the idea, seeing the Scriptures have never given any license for it.

John was a prophet in either the Jewish or the Christian dispensation. That there should be a difficulty for a moment with any one, who professes to read the Scriptures, to decide which, seems somewhat surprising. The accumulated evidence which would seem to say he was not in the Christian dispensation (and consequently did not administer Christian baptism), if fairly looked at, is overwhelming on every hand. Some of this evidence we shall presently notice, while we now turn to one or two circumstances sufficiently convincing to prove that John was a prophet, and the last of the prophets, under the Jewish dispensation.

The language of prophecy concerning the character and office of John was, "I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." If this was to precede the coming of the day of the Lord, it would be strange for us to interpret it as after; and if the resemblance of his char-

acter and office should so correspond with the prophet Elijah as for him to bear his name, under what other dispensation could he exist, for he was never to acomplish among the Gentiles what Elijah did among the Jews, in recovering them from idolatry and backsliding? When Jesus said to his disciples, concerning John, "And if ye will receive it, *this is Elias* which was for to come," it was in the same connection that he testified, "Verily, I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not risen *a greater prophet* than John the Baptist." The comparison doubtless here must have been with the Jewish prophets; for if John were not one of their order, and under the same dispensation with them, upon what ground could there be such a comparison? But, in order to give a more definite force to this statement, Jesus adds, "Notwithstanding, he that *is least* in the kingdom of heaven is greater than *he*." It seems impossible to attach any other meaning to these words than that the least of the prophets under the Christian dispensation should be so blessed with additional knowledge and privilege, that he should be greater than the greatest prophet under the Jewish dispensation.

John, in addressing his disciples, said, "Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him." Here, again, if he were before the Messiah, how could he be in his kingdom? He adds: "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled." Does he speak here like one in the Christian dispensation, or the Christian church, which is the bride whom the bridegroom hath? He is only the friend of the bridegroom, as he acknowledges. The truth is beyond doubt that John and his ministry belonged to the Jewish dispensation; that the repentance he demanded was of a legal character, and the baptism he administered had relation to a ceremonial observance under the law.

SECTION V. — JESUS BAPTIZED BY JOHN.

While John was engaged in the office of his ministry, and multitudes were pressing to hear him, we find Jesus going forth to hear and demand of the prophet the rite of baptism to be

administered to him. The stern rebuker of the multitude for their sins, humbles himself before the Lord, and, conscious of his inferiority to Him whose harbinger he was, said, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou unto me?"

This was the first meeting between the Lord and his messenger, and it is one calculated to fill the contemplating mind with admiration. The mighty Lord and long-promised Messiah appeared at last in his public character: not in the pomp and grandeur of an earthly prince following his pioneer with a court retinue, nor with the attractive pageantry of any earthly greatness; but with an assembled multitude of lowly sinners, to submit to the observance of the institutions of Heaven, and be reckoned one among the people, in all meekness and lowliness. The one who, being in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made himself of no reputation.

Can we wander in our imagination to the side of the river Jordan, in the wilderness of Judea, and see from every quarter multitudes wending their way to one spot, where an assembled group are already congregated? There stands an individual whose presence is the fo-

cus of attraction, of stern yet amiable aspect—great, yet loving and compassionate; his camel's-hair raiment, fastened around him with a leathern girdle, gives him the aspect of a prophet of the Lord, and his whole demeanor and ministry confirm the impression, for "all held John to be a prophet." He was, as described by the Saviour himself, "a burning and a shining light."

The scenes and excitement here had continued for some time, the prophet preaching repentance and baptizing penitents in Jordan; they confessing their sins, and he pointing them to look for the speedy appearance of the Saviour, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." But now a new feature is given to the increasing excitement: another person appears, who is greater than John. There goes the meek and lowly Jesus to this same spot of interest; and, by the intimation of Heaven, John recognises *the One* whom he had been constantly affirming to the multitude was at hand: therefore he was sent baptizing with water. Now he could say: "There standeth one among you, whom ye know not; he it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am

not worthy to unloose." The great prophet is abased before the Lord, and declares his consciousness that the lowest menial servitude he is not worthy to discharge for such an august and glorious being as he who now stands in the congregated audience.

But Jesus sues for the baptismal rite to be administered to him at the prophet's hands, amid all the conscious unworthiness felt, and the scruples made, by John. Hear the prevailing words of the "Messenger of the covenant," the Lord of life and glory: "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." It became as binding on John to administer, as it was on Christ to submit to, the rite of baptism.

But here another fresh incident occurs. The Saviour is baptized, and coming up out of the water; John is looking up, when the heavens open to his view, and he sees the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Jesus, while a voice from heaven proclaims, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Oh, how solemnly majestic is the scene at Jordan, in the review of such events!

The Saviour is baptized in obedience to the

institutions of Heaven. The Spirit honors him in his descent, and the voice of God expresses his delight in his dear Son. John receives the definite testimony that Jesus is the true Messiah, and speaks of it as the confirmatory testimony; he could now unhesitatingly point to Jesus and say, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" He gives this reason for so speaking of Jesus: "I knew him not" (that is, not as now, in the character of the Saviour's office and work), "but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, 'Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.' And I saw, and bare record, that this is the Son of God."

SECTION VI. — THE CHARACTER OF THE RITE ADMINISTERED TO CHRIST.

Having noticed the historical features of the baptizing of Jesus by John in Jordan, the question now is: 'What was the character of that baptism which Jesus received at the hands of John — was it Christian, or was it an ordinance

to be classed with the institutions of the legal dispensation?'

Some great men have labored to display their weakness in attempting to prove it to be a Christian ordinance — the same with the baptism now enjoined upon Christians to observe. Some men of considerable literary attainments have ventured to expose their folly in favor of their own dogmas, in exhibiting Christ as a pattern of Christian obedience, thinking to give greater significancy to an ordinance in the minds of the vulgar and untutored than it possesses as a mere command of Christ's.

Is it not a common thing at the baptismal waters to hear the administrator of the Christian institute dilate upon the acts of John Baptist, and the historical features of Christ's baptism, telling the candidates that they are following their Divine Lord in the holy institution, while they pervert the words of the angel who pointed Mary to the tomb of Jesus, and apply them literally to the water, saying, "Come see the place where the Lord lay"? Vast multitudes of baptists, in the simplicity of ignorance, have taken hold of this sophistry, and attached the idea of greater significancy to their Christian

baptism, under the belief that in this they had trodden exactly in the footsteps of the Saviour, who himself yielded to this Christian rite.

So prone have the generality of the baptists been to turn their minds to Christ, as their example in observing the ordinance of Christian baptism, that, to view it as an institution of Christ's, enjoined by him upon all his disciples as his requirement, has comparatively little or no weight upon their minds; so that, were they to be convinced that the notions which had given so much extra importance in their estimation to baptism, had no existence at all in reality, they would be ready to regard the ordinance with comparative indifference. Such would be the consequence of erroneously endeavoring to strengthen the force of a rite which has its legitimate influence in being a positive institution of the Christian dispensation.

It really seems too absurd to need a word in refutation of so monstrous an incongruity as that which seeks to make John's baptism a Christian ordinance, and the baptism of Jesus by John, Christian baptism. Yet, since there is no vulgar error but what multitudes will be found to embrace it, particularly if it has rela-

tion to religious doctrines and institutes—nor no self-evident principle to which every dispassionate man of common sense might bow, but what some rigorous partisan will stumble over —it may be necessary perhaps to ask of those who are infatuated with their own folly, that which is in itself evidently impossible: 'How could Jesus be baptized into the faith of that of which he himself was the author and finisher? how could he submit to a rite which takes its existence from his own lips? how could he be baptized into the Trinity, himself a party in that Trinity?' These and other absurdities must have been, if Christ had received from John Christian baptism.

It seems also next to impossible that there could be any difficulty in the way of understanding the nature of the Saviour's address to John, which prevailed over all his scruples in administering baptism to Christ. "It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness," clearly proves that whatever God had instituted and enjoined upon the Jewish people for their observance, it was meet that he as a Jew should rigorously observe.

Jesus was a Jew, of the city of Bethlehem,

of the tribe of Judah, and of the seed of David. He was made under the law, and in the time when all the religious institutions were as much in force as they had ever been; as yet none were abrogated. He stood as one of the people, subject to every moral and religious duty, and as much required to yield obedience as any one in the nation. In no one particular did he fail to observe the requirement of the strict letter of the law.

All the ceremonial institutions had relation to the character of the people as sinners; and though Jesus was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, in his own nature and character, he felt himself under obligation to regard with religious devotion every ceremonial enjoined by God upon the people. The institution of baptism by John was of heavenly origin; and, notwithstanding Jesus was not one who needed repentance nor ceremonial purification, yet, as one of the nation, it was obligatory on him to observe Heaven's high laws, submit to what God had enjoined, and so fulfil all righteousness.

We can readily understand how important it was that He, who was to be the only mediator

between God and man, should himself pay due regard to everything enjoined by God for religious observance. Could he who was holiness itself treat with any indifference what was righteously commanded? could he who had to plead the cause of his people, entreat on their behalf that mercy for his sake should be extended to them, when he himself had failed even in one particular to do honor to the laws of Heaven? No, it behooved Jesus to fulfil all righteousness. Born into the world while as yet, of necessity, the legal and ceremonial dispensation was in full force, nor could come to an end until he abolished it in his death (for under it he was to live and fulfil the law), he bowed a willing submission, and demanded that in his own person the last religious institution under the Jewish dispensation should be honored and obeyed.

The sequel of that devout submission is crowned with glory and blessedness. The heavens open—the Spirit descends upon Jesus—and the Father's voice is heard to proclaim, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Father and the Spirit conjoin to publicly honor the Son, who had thus done honor to the institutes of Heaven before men. Nor

is this all, inasmuch as it would here seem to be manifest that he was solemnly inaugurated to the acts of his public ministry and life.

The mission of the Lord Jesus was publicly accredited; and, as he was to be the High-Priest over the house of God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for the people—so, like the Aaronical priest, he was initiated into his office by washing and anointing: he was washed by the baptism in water, and anointed by the descent of the Holy Ghost.

So far, then, we have seen that John's baptism and its administration to Christ is in no sense a Christian ordinance, neither has in it Christian example. All the attempts that have been made to sustain such a view must fall to the ground as utterly worthless in the estimation of every candid inquirer after truth, and it is high time that such unjustifiable notions should be put aside by baptists. If they wish to maintain any credit for sincerity and truthfulness, they must drop such an untenable position, and turn to the commission of Christ and the observances under the Christian dispensation, to advocate the rite of Christian baptism, and the views which, as a denomination, they

seek to sustain. How far some of them can be defended we have yet to examine.

SECTION VII. — PROOF DEMONSTRABLE THAT JOHN'S BAPTISM WAS NOT CHRISTIAN.

THERE are circumstances open to investigation, of which we would here avail ourselves, confirmatory of the opinions advanced in rejecting John's mission, ministry, and baptism, as belonging to the Christian dispensation, and for regarding it as having a place in the Jewish economy and closing events connected with the ancient institutions of the Jewish church.

It has been affirmed that John's baptism corresponded in all particulars with the baptism administered by the apostles and disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ, after they had received their commission from him to baptize. Nothing can be more easy than to make broad assertions: they have been doubtless made in this particular from such impression of mind having been received; but if not to be sustained, we can only conclude that those impressions were the effect of ignorant simplicity and superstition.

When we turn to the scripture record, to see

if we can trace any such corresponding features as are affirmed to exist between the two ordinances, we are surprised to find that in every particular but one they are at variance. They bear no resemblance but in the submerging of the candidates in water. Robert Hall thus speaks upon this particular of the baptism of John, and the Christian ordinance: "In order to constitute an identity in religious rites, two things are requisite — a sameness in the corporeal action, and a sameness in the import. The action may be the same, yet the rites totally different, or Christian baptism must be confounded with legal Jewish purifications, the greater part of which consisted in a total immersion of the body in water."

John's baptism and Christian baptism are direct contrasts in the effects which accompanied them. The rite administered by John was a mere immersion in water, unaccompanied with the effusion of the Spirit, except in the instance of the baptism of Jesus, and even that differed from the miraculous gifts and graces which attended Christian baptism at the commencement of the Christian dispensation. John speaks somewhat disparagingly of his own baptism, when,

contemplating the grandeur of Christ's, he said: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." St. Chrysostom here observes of John: "Having agitated their minds with the fear of future judgment, and the mention of the axe, and the rejection of their ancestors, and the substitution of a new race, together with the double menace of excision and burning, and by all these means softened their obduracy, and disposed them to a desire of deliverance from these evils, he then introduces the mention of Christ, not in a simple manner, but with much elevation: in exhibiting his own disparity, lest he should appear to be using the language of compliment, he commences by stating a comparison betwixt the benefits bestowed by each. For he did not immediately say, 'I am not worthy to unloose the latchet of his shoes;' but, having first stated the insignificance of his own baptism, and showed that it had no effect beyond bringing them to repentance (for he did not style it the water of remission, but of repentance), he proceeds to the baptism ordained by

Christ, which was replete with an ineffable gift" (Homily XI., on Matthew).

John did not receive his commission to baptize from the Lord Jesus Christ, but from the Father, and he makes the marked distinction in the persons of the Trinity, that it might be unquestionably clear. We ask, can that be a Christian institution which is declared to be received, not from Christ, but from the Father? And, being so plainly stated by John, does it not seem something like arrogance to profess to know more about the prophet's commission than he knew of it himself, and to contradict every statement which John has made concerning this subject? We may ask such to what oracle they have been for their wisdom to venture upon a contradiction of such a plain statement as this: "I knew him not, but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, 'Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.'" Could it be a Christian ordinance, which was for some time practised before Christ was made known to John? or could that be a Christian ordinance not founded on Christ's authority, and which in one particu-

lar was designed to make him manifest? It is truly absurd so to reason.

John's baptism was unto repentance, and his message was, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." He demanded of the people reformation, as a preparation for the approaching kingdom of heaven; in other words, for the coming Messiah. But the baptism commanded by Christ was with the acknowledged faith in his appearance, and not only so, but in the belief of his death and resurrection. There was no baptizing into the name of the Trinity of persons in the Godhead by John, nor into any one of the names of Deity, but simply into a state of repentance. The baptism administered as Christian necessarily bears the name of Christ, and that in connection with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

The baptism of John was confined to the Jewish people, and those who might have been proselytes to the Jewish religion: but not so the Christian — that was for all nations; and in the commission of Jesus it is emphatically laid down that, contrary to all the restrictions which had gone before, they were to preach the gospel to every creature, and baptize all nations as they taught them the truths of Christianity.

John's baptism was no proselyting or initiating ordinance to the Christian dispensation. It was an external purification for an acknowledged religious people, who were not required to relinquish their former religious notions, and adopt a new system of worship, but to return to the purity of that which they had forsaken, to hold fast what they had received, and to look for a yet greater mercy, in the speedy advent of the long-promised Messiah. *He* who should lead them on from Judaism to Christianity, or otherwise, what could be meant when it was said of John, that "*he* should turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just?" Surely nothing but that a restoration of the spirit of religious worship which was in the patriarchs should be revived, and that the children should be converted to pure Judaism by John, in the true spirit of Elias, who recovered through his ministry the people from idolatry to worship the true and living God, according to the institutions of Moses.

John's baptism was not Christian, or there never would have been the rebaptizing of his disciples. Some have attempted to pervert the

sense of as plain and simple a sentence of common language as could have been possibly written, where it is recorded, in Acts 19th, that twelve of John's disciples were commanded by Paul to be baptized in the name of Jesus. Doubtless there were hundreds like the disciples at Ephesus who had been baptized by John, among the thousands of the first converts to Christianity, who were rebaptized in the name of Jesus.

These are but cursory remarks upon some of the things which give prominent distinction to the baptism of John, as being in no way connected with the Christian dispensation. It is difficult, in so short a space, to bring before the mind a subject so replete with decisive evidence in favor of John being a Jewish prophet, exercising his ministerial commission under the Jewish dispensation. But in so brief a review there may be some things convincing to many; and should they lead only to a prayerful and dispassionate investigation, the end must be attained which is here sought—viz., the disabuse of many minds long held in error in reference to an institution which in itself points out its true and proper nature.

SECTION VIII. — THE PERIOD WHEN THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION SUPERSEDED THE JEWISH.

There is another feature of importance perhaps connected with the subject of John's baptism that must not be lost sight of in this place. An inquiry will naturally arise concerning the period of the commencement of the Christian dispensation, if it did not begin with the life of John or Christ. Chronologists have fixed the commencement of the Christian era about the third or fourth year after the advent of our Lord, but an epoch of time so fixed by men is no guide in determining a period for the commencement of a dispensation of a religious order. There have been conflicting opinions upon this particular. Some have considered that the Christian dispensation commenced with the birth of Christ, others with the ministry of John; some, again, with the ministry of Christ; others with the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, the time when he gave commission to the apostles and disciples; and, again, his ascension, and the day of pentecost. With all these points of time before the mind, not a few have come to the conclu-

sion that it is difficult to determine when the Christian dispensation may be truly said to have had its commencement.

It ought to be determined so far, that the Christian dispensation could not have had a commencement before the crucifixion of Christ, or the passover which was prepared for him to celebrate immediately before his death. The reason for such a conclusion arises from the consideration that there must be a perfect harmony in the economy of religion, so that two different dispensations could never be in force at the same time. Judaism and Christianity could not exist together: the one must cease at the commencement of the other. The instant the Jewish dispensation was abolished, the Christian one began: and can we, then, find a more definite period for this than when Christ exclaimed upon the cross, "*It is finished*," and then expired?

Jesus was made under the law not only the moral but the ceremonial law, and was the end of both for righteousness to every one that believeth. He fulfilled the moral law for his people; and, as to the ceremonial, it was necessary that all things should have their accomplish-

ment in him, as well as that in religious worship he should observe all the institutions of Heaven. That the Christian dispensation could not be in existence while Christ lived is certain, inasmuch as the people could not yield obedience to both it and the Jewish dispensation. If Christianity existed in the lifetime of Christ, we should now be fully justified in observing all the Jewish rites and ceremonies, and should be transgressors of the law of God if we did not, for Jesus observed them, with his disciples, as obligatory. He kept the Jewish feasts to the end, and, with special regard to the feast of the passover, he sent his disciples to make ready for its due observance. That the Jewish dispensation was in existence when he specially commanded the preparation for observing one of its feasts must be admitted, or we throw the economy of Heaven into confused and conflicting elements by making two dispensations to exist at the same time.

There was no Christian dispensation in existence while as yet the law or any part of it remained unfulfilled by Christ, or while the things in the law concerning him had not as yet had their end. When Christ gave permission to

Judas to go and complete his traitorous designs, he had finished for ever the duties connected with the institutions of the Jewish dispensation. But one thing remained, which was of a passive nature: it was that *he*, the antitype of the passover, should be slain, and suffer the ignominious death of the cross, upon which, in death, he declared, "It is finished."

Here, then, virtually, the Jewish dispensation had an end; and, if there could have been any period in which for a moment it could be supposed that the Jewish dispensation was abolished, and the Christian one not in existence, it must have been on the Jewish sabbath when Jesus rested in the tomb, though doubtless in paradise the Spirit of Jesus was proclaiming the victories of his cross, and declaring among the congregation of the spirits of just men made perfect that *the kingdom of heaven had commenced among men.*

The morn of his resurrection was a hallowed period: the Sun of Righteousness had risen ere the sun of nature had enlightened the horizon of the tomb. Jesus left the grave to take to himself his dominion—*his* both by conquest and gift—and to declare, "All power is given

unto me in heaven and in earth." The Christian dispensation is a sabbatism of which the Jewish sabbath was typical; so that, now, "he that believeth hath entered into rest." The resurrection day of our Lord openly made it manifest that the Christian sabbath or dispensation had commenced, and we specially honor the first day of the week in religious worship, and so perpetuate the glorious remembrance of the commencement of the kingdom of Christ among men.

SECT. IX. — THE BAPTISM ADMINISTERED BY CHRIST'S DISCIPLES BEFORE THE DAY OF PENTECOST.

Let us suppose one other inquiry started concerning the determination of John's ministry and baptism, and it is perhaps the only remaining one that can possibly be mooted: it bears upon the baptism administered by the disciples of our Lord Jesus during his life on earth. It may be said that, 'if John's baptism was not Christian baptism, what was that which these disciples practised, and which aroused the jealousy of John's disciples, when they saw more converts made to Jesus than to John? and if

John did not baptize in the name of Jesus, is it not reasonable to suppose that they did who made converts to Christ? If the baptism practised by these disciples was not the same as John's baptism, was it not manifest that they administered the Christian ordinance?'

Turn to the conduct of the apostles and disciples whom our Lord sent out, to seek the solution of this matter. We read the commission given to the apostles in Matt. 10: 5–8: "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying: 'Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils,'" &c. In Luke 10: 1, we read: "After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come," &c. We find the commission delivered to them is to the same effect as that delivered to the twelve, and in nearly the same words, embracing the same particulars in reference to their own conduct; and as they wrought

miracles upon the people, they were to say, "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."

Here it is evident that the disciples had from the lips of the Saviour the very preaching which John had from heaven, as to the announcement of the approach of the kingdom of heaven. They had no command to baptize, and it is certain that they could not have baptized in the name of Jesus, as he had not enjoined it. The import of their mission was, that as yet he had not appeared to set up his kingdom—his dispensation had not begun. They had the same ministry intrusted to them by Jesus as was given to John from heaven: thus the Saviour avoided anything like collision. The disciples preached and practised as did John: they preached, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," and baptized into the faith of that approaching kingdom.

But it may be asked: 'Upon what ground, then, could there be anything like jealousy arising in the minds of John's disciples about these disciples of Jesus? and upon what ground could they regard the distinction between their baptism and that of John?' The whole distinction lies here, and the ground which excited jealousy is evidently to be traced to this one circum-

stance: John did no miracle, but these disciples were empowered to work miracles as well as preach; so that a greater multitude were attracted to them, and were baptized by them—which led the disciples of John to complain to him of the fact.

We have now touched upon every necessary topic to illustrate the nature of John's baptism, and to prove that the ordinance of Christian baptism had no existence in the lifetime of John, or prior to the day of pentecost, though the commission was delivered to the apostles before the ascension of Christ. But apart from any attempt to make plain that which should be considered self-evident, one question alone is sufficient to overthrow all the useless arguments of those who wish to claim for John's baptism, or the baptism practised by the disciples of Christ during his life upon earth, the title of Christian baptism: 'How can an institute of a kingdom be in existence before the kingdom itself is set up? or what can be more certain than that a kingdom at hand is not as yet a kingdom?'

We conceive that, to every candid inquirer after truth, it must be manifest that there is no

room for even the shadow of conjecture, to suppose that John's baptism was a Christian ordinance. It follows, therefore, of necessity, that it was not the Christian ordinance administered to Christ, but decidedly a rite instituted for observance under the Jewish dispensation, and abrogated by the law of the kingdom of Christ, when Christian baptism was enjoined.

Here the first stronghold of baptists in support of their rigorous practice of restricted communion is demolished. The platform of the great oracle, Abraham Booth, is swept away. Good and gracious as he was, his weakness and erroneous views on this point are but too manifest; and multitudes of baptists, in the exercise of judgment and candor, if they will suffer Truth to lift up her voice, will be ready to exclaim, in consternation and surprise, 'Where are we?' The answer must be—'Just where you have suffered yourselves to be carried by partisans; and the sooner you make your retreat, and turn to the word and testimony of Eternal Truth as a guide, the better for your peace of conscience, and prosperity of soul before God.'

PART II.

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

SECTION I. — THE CIRCUMSTANCES CONNECTED WITH ITS INSTITUTION.

Christian baptism will now come under consideration, as a positive institute of the dispensation under which we live, and be reviewed in its particular bearings in relation to the disciples of Jesus.

In treating of John's baptism we have removed the Christian ordinance from any connection with it, and made it sufficiently clear that, prior to the death of Christ on Calvary's cross, Christian baptism had no existence. It is, therefore, open now for calm investigation, disencumbered from other institutions, and fairly separated from the confusion into which it

has been too often cast by introducing it with the history of events immediately preceding the Christian dispensation.

Jesus Christ lived, suffered, and died in our world, in the fulfilment of a commission, which he received from the Father. As the servant of the covenant of grace, he was ready to declare that it was his meat and his drink to do the will of Him that sent him, and to finish his work. But in all that Jesus did and suffered, he had his mind onward to the full recompense of reward. A kingdom was promised him by the Father, which he was to inherit by gift and by conquest. It is certain this was in some particulars the animating prospect to which the prophet refers: "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isaiah 53: 11); and is what Paul speaks of when writing about the sufferings of Christ as the Christian's pattern: "Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12: 2). With such like prospects Jesus addressed these inspiring words to his apostles: "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint

unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22: 28–30).

By the power of God the Father, Jesus was raised from the dead, to receive the kingdom; in anticipation of which, he was the surety of the covenant to bleed and to die. The resurrection of Jesus was the seal of his finished work, and the basis of the Christian's hope. When he came forth from the chambers of the dead, he rose in the triumphs of a mighty victor, invested with authority, as King of kings and Lord of lords. Now his kingdom begins, and he declares, "*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*" No longer as a servant, but as a prince—*now* the dispensation of the kingdom of his grace commences.

The proclamation of the commencement of any government, under which a community at large is to be fostered, displaying every concern for liberty, prosperity, and happiness, will be ever after regarded with feelings of interest and delight, particularly if that which had preceded it, in the history of the people, had been of an oppressive, fearful, and debasing nature. The

movements which advanced the people from degradation to glory, from bondage to liberty, from misery to happiness, could not fail to produce sensations of delight; the events could not be buried in oblivion, nor the benefactors regarded with other than cherished feelings of reverence and love.

But no advantage in a nation's history will bear the slightest comparison with the benefits effected by Christ in his death for his people, and the blessings which were brought to them when the kingdom and dispensation of his grace commenced. Surely, then, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead marks the period of the commencement of so blessed a government as the reign of his grace. Christians should look back to this event, and glorify God for it, and for so many infinitely blessed things made sure to them by it.

The kingdom being now virtually taken, the Lord proclaims to his disciples the power and authority with which he is invested, and issues his great commission to his servants, saying: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to

observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28: 19, 20).

Nothing remained but for them to be invested with the power of the Holy Spirit, for the discharge of this important and blessed commission. The Saviour, therefore, said unto them: "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24: 49). Invested with such power, they were to go forth in the discharge of the ministry with which they had been so solemnly intrusted.

Jesus makes his departure from this world from the mount of Olives. In the presence of his assembled apostles he ascends up to heaven, and a cloud receives him out of their sight. He enters the heaven of heavens as *the King of glory*, the Lord God, mighty in battle; acknowledged so by the myriads who inhabit the skies. He takes his seat on the throne of glory, at the Father's right hand (which position he continues to occupy) in the midst of the throne. There he receives gifts for men, even the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among

them. The Holy Spirit, sent by Jesus, now descends, in confirmation of his parting promise; and the wondrous benefits of his rich and heavenly gifts on the day of pentecost have often been considered by us with admiring interest.

Under the mighty influences of the Holy Spirit, the apostles and disciples of Jesus are now made a spiritually-armed force in the kingdom of their Saviour. They preached, baptized, and wrought miracles before, but it was in anticipation of the coming kingdom—it was to prepare the people for this great event—it was while as yet their Lord was in humiliation and suffering—when he was a servant, and had not died, nor abrogated the Jewish institutions: but now they were abolished, the *old things* of the ceremonial law had *vanished away*, and the dispensation of the Spirit and power *had come*. The legal dispensation, from which they had just merged, had no glory, by reason of that which excelled.

Truly, the apostles and disciples did not know for themselves the full blessings of the dispensation into which they were now so gloriously conducted. From their long-cherished rites of Judaism, they seemed but little prepared (notwithstanding the exalted notions they had of

the blessings of the kingdom of heaven) to embrace so much freedom as that which was secured to them by their Lord and King. Therefore, though the Jewish dispensation had virtually seen an end, and its institutions been annulled, they could not so suddenly yield up all, and declare themselves free. They laid hold with a tenacious grasp of some of their most approved ceremonials, and clung fast to their national prejudices; but by degrees they relaxed their hold, and yielded up, one by one, till at last, by the increased light they enjoyed under the influence and teaching of the Holy Spirit, they gloried in declaring themselves free, and in uttering their strong conviction that old things had passed away, and all things had become new.

SECTION II. — THE INTERIM BEFORE ITS ADMINISTRATION.

The Christian dispensation was specially designed to be the dispensation of the Spirit and power; therefore, though proclaimed by Jesus immediately after his resurrection, nothing was done for its promulgation among men till the

descent of the Holy Spirit. Jesus abode forty days with his disciples, instructing them in things pertaining to his kingdom; and, after delivering to them all his gracious commands, he left them with this injunction, that they should do nothing in his kingdom till the Spirit, in his ruling power, took up his abode among them. "Wait," said he, "for the promise of the Father, which ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." This latter sentence intimated that John had gone before with water-baptism, proclaiming the near approach of the kingdom of heaven, but that they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost, in confirmation that the kingdom was in actual existence, that it was now set up among men, and that the Spirit was the ruling and governing power presiding therein.

When the Saviour ascended to heaven, the apostles returned to Jerusalem, in obedience to his last command, to wait for the promised blessing of the Spirit, that, under the power bestowed on them, they might enter upon the public duties of the ministry of the kingdom. But in the interim they must needs be doing

something; had it been only that they continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, which we read they were engaged in, they would have well done, for this was the proper posture of waiting for the descent of the Spirit; but they must needs set to work about something: and as the number of the twelve apostles was lacking one, by the awful apostacy and end of Judas, they were for making their original number up, *before* the coming of the Spirit into the kingdom. With much solemnity and prayer they sought the Lord to decide, through their ballot, the man whom he would approve of to occupy that vacancy. The lot fell on Matthias, who apparently was a godly man, and in every way qualified to occupy the important post.

But this act of the apostles in filling up their number never appears to have been ratified in heaven. Though they were unquestionably sincere in what they did, they should, notwithstanding, have rather observed the strict letter of the command, "*Wait;*" for Jesus had an apostle in reserve whom they knew not of—*one* whom he would reveal in his own time and pleasure—*one* whom he intended should be, as the apostle expresses it, "born out of due time." The Lord

himself in his glory came from heaven to arrest Saul of Tarsus, that he might see Jesus, be the witness of his invested glory, and an apostle specially sent to the Gentiles.

These particular circumstances are entitled to grave consideration. They impress us with the fact of the entire suspension of all operation, in the newly-proclaimed kingdom of heaven, until the day of pentecost. Christ would have nothing publicly done from the time of his resurrection until the descent of the Spirit; only among themselves, as disciples, their religious worship and service were acceptable to him. The Spirit's presence and power was to give sanction and validity to their ministry in preaching and baptizing, and in discharging all the duties which Christ had commanded them. The power and dominion given to Jesus upon his resurrection was the kingdom of heaven among men, but then it wanted the presiding power to give validity to its sanctions; it was a thing formed, but wanted *animus*.

Here it will be seen that baptism as an institution of this new dispensation could not have been administered from the time of the resurrection of Christ down to the pentecostal effu-

sion of the Spirit, though expressly commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ, much less could it have been practised before Christ abolished the Jewish ceremonials, and laid in the tomb with his own body their rites and their dispensation. Away, then, and for ever, with unfounded notions for which the Scriptures find no place!

The expediency of Christ's departure, and the necessity for the descent of the Holy Spirit, will bear no other definite interpretation but that the dispensation of Christ would remain stationary till the Spirit set it in motion. The letter is nothing, the word is nothing, the law is nothing: it is the Spirit that giveth life to the Christian dispensation. Look, then, to the effect of his descent: what a mighty revolution! When the world first began to move upon its axis, in the performance of its own revolution and its revolution in its orbit around the sun, the centre of its gravity, there was displayed the effect of the application of the will of the mighty Creator: this mainspring of action, as with the touch of the finger, led off into infinite space inert matter with all its relative movements. So, when the Holy Spirit came forth into the Christian dispensation, *he* gave that power which

invested its laws and institutions with validity; and their effects, through the instrumentality of the apostles and disciples of Christ, were seen immediately — by his almighty, life-giving touch, the whole was put into operation on that memorable period of his descent with gifts and graces from the glorified Saviour. Henceforth, around the ascended "Sun of Righteousness," the dispensation of the grace of God, and the kingdom of Christ among men, is seen revolving — *he* the true centre of gravity.

SECTION III. — THE CHARACTER AND EFFECTS OF THE APOSTLES' PREACHING ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST.

The apostles opened their commission, and began to preach the gospel of the kingdom in various languages and dialects, as the Spirit gave them utterance. The confusion of tongues formed no barrier to their understanding what was going forward; every man heard the astounding and animating mysteries of the kingdom in his native language, and the truths uttered found their way to the hearts of the audience. Oh, what a time was that, when Peter addressed the assembly with such heart-stirring communi-

cations! and what an amazingly blessed effect was produced as conviction grappled with their consciences! "What shall we do?" was their agonizing and despairing cry. And the joyful intelligence, as with magnetic operation, returned—"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2: 38).

It may here cross the mind that there is a similarity between the preaching of Peter and the ministry of John, particularly as the advocates for making John's baptism the Christian ordinance have laid hold of this, and have upon this ground unhesitatingly affirmed that it constituted both baptisms of the same nature.—Though it may appear to be taking up what we have professedly dispensed with, yet as it falls in our way, and, if unheeded, might leave a doubt upon the minds of some that this is one particular not made clear to them: for their sakes, then, we say, in words there is a likeness of sound: repentance, baptism, and remission of sins, are the same expressions, but the application and design of their use are often vastly different; after comparing these words and find-

ing them the same, there is nothing else in what John and Peter said that bears resemblance, as we shall see.

John calls for repentance, and fruits meet for repentance. Those fruits he describes as *charity*, *honesty*, *humanity*, *truthfulness*, and *contentment*. The Jews had become a shamefully-iniquitous people, and, though attending to some of the externals of religion, by observing instituted rites, their hearts had departed from the Lord. They were, therefore, to repent of their conduct, and practise a legal reformation. But Peter charges his audience with *murder*—the *dreadful murder of the Son of God*. They become convicted of the crime in the court of their own consciences, and cry out, "What shall we do?" They are enjoined to repent, for there is the promise of pardon for this their awful crime, if they truly repent before God.

We see that John baptized into a penitential reformation in morals, and into the faith of the speedy coming of the Messiah. But Peter commands baptism in the name of Jesus Christ as the Saviour now come, to whom they had done whatsoever they pleased, in hanging him to a tree, but who was raised from the dead to be a

Prince and a Saviour to give both repentance and remission of sins. So that while John baptized into a legal repentance, and the promise of remission of sins upon the ground of faith in a coming Saviour—just as it was in relation to the Jews as far back as Abraham's days—Peter spoke of the remission of sins to those whom he addressed upon their repentance and baptism into the name of Jesus Christ—into the faith of the sacrifice of Christ, and the dispensation of the gospel of his grace; the repentance and faith both the gift of Christ, as we read in Acts 5 : 31.

John makes no allusion to the Spirit, but Peter declares that the genuine penitents shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. There needs not a word of comment here. The Scriptures will at once discover that all the likeness to be found between John's ministry and Peter's, to give the idea that their baptisms were the same, may be also said of every Jewish institute in its resemblance to the Christian dispensation; and upon such construction there would be nothing Jewish and nothing Christian, really, but a confused amalgamation.

The conclusion to which the mind seems to

be drawn is this: that God in infinite mercy has made the thing plain that the Jewish dispensation was at an end when his Son suffered upon Calvary; and that the Christian dispensation had its commencement from that time, and was declared by Jesus when he arose from the dead, and testified, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." It can not be mistaken, when men cease to search for evidence to back up their fostered notions of error, and come with sincerity to know what is of God. And, moreover, it is also as conclusively demonstrable, that, until the dispensation was emphatically declared to be the dispensation of the Spirit by his descent on the day of pentecost, no institutions of the Christian dispensation, though given as laws of the kingdom by Christ to his apostles, could have been valid if observed before that time. It is set forth in such a manner as to amount to a certainty, that, had the apostles preached in the interim of Christ's ascension and the descent of the Spirit, no beneficial results would have followed; and had they baptized, though in the name of their risen and ascended Lord, during that interim, such baptism would have been invalid. They were com-

missioned, but not installed into the ministry: their Lord had laid out to them their duty, but they were themselves unbaptized. The rite of water-baptism as a Christian institute they were not to receive; but, as the administerers of it, they were first to be baptized with the Holy Ghost (the expression of the Saviour, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence," is remarkable). If, therefore, multitudes had been baptized by the apostles before the descent of the Holy Spirit, Heaven would not have stamped such baptisms as valid, and all would doubtless have been rebaptized after the day of pentecost. The apostles and disciples invested with the Spirit went forth preaching and baptizing in the discharge of their great commission.

SECTION IV. — NATURE OF THE ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM.

Baptism, as an ordinance of the Christian dispensation, is to be practised in connection with the preaching of the gospel till the end.

Words are the signs of ideas, and carry for the most part the sense and true signification of what is in the mind. We therefore look to

the word "baptize" *(baptizo)* as the symbol of the idea in the mind of the great Lawgiver, when he said, "Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." It is necessary also that a word, as a symbol of an idea, should be familiar to all engaged in colloquy; otherwise the individual speaking, though expressing his own mind, does not convey his ideas to those with whom he converses. But words for the most part in language are not symbols limited to convey but one idea: a word may be the sign of several ideas, and in such cases its definite signification must depend upon its connection with other words. The multiplication of words serves to express the conceptions of the mind, and constitutes the language of a community or nation. In living languages, especially in the English, we find that, by general consent and usage, some words often change their signification, for they are signs only of certain ideas so long as usage permits, while some become obsolete.

The word *baptize* has been made to signify indiscriminately *to dip*, *plunge*, *pour*, or *sprinkle;* but it is referable to its original, there we

believe that to baptize is not to pour, or sprinkle, or to wash, in the sense we understand to wash, but to *submerge*. If the word *baptizo* had been translated into so variable a language as the English, the word to express it might have been as far removed from its signification as the word *charity* is, or even farther, and not have been even traceable to the word *baptizo*, of which it was the translation. We see, from present abuse, to what innovations an ordinance of the Lord might be exposed by variable signification of words.

The Greek *bapto* and *baptizo* are two forms of the verb: *bapto* is the primitive, and *baptizo* the derivative. These changes have been so often rung in the ears by controversialists as to become wearisome sounds; therefore it is unnecessary to dwell upon them here. It shall suffice to say but little upon the word, though by the common usage of the symbol at that time when used by the Lord, we are definitely to understand what ceremony the Lawgiver enjoined in the institution of baptism. The primitive and derivative verbs generally agree in their leading and primary signification; but as in some cases meanings are taken up by the one

which may not be by the other, it would be necessary, if entering fully upon the signification of the verb, to treat it only in respect to its derivative form, inasmuch as the rite of baptism is always designated by *baptizo;* but, in both primitive and derivative forms, we are satisfied it is in favor of *to plunge*, *to dip*, *to immerse*, &c., and must be proved so far as we know by linguists that such was the signification attached to it by Jesus when he gave his commission to the apostles to baptize.

It would be far better for men, who go about to raise a doubt in reference to the signification of the Greek word, to leave that matter as it is; for they are constrained, after investigating every doubtful example, to yield, evidently with great unwillingness, and to say, with Professor Stewart, "It is probable, though not quite certain, that *baptizo* in the New Testament signifies *to immerse*."

Let there be this much of candor on the part of those who have departed from the original law of baptism: let them say, if they can conscientiously so look upon the matter of the command, that they are not bound to adhere to the original form of the institution, since it is an

external rite, and that they feel safe and approved by the Great Lawgiver, as virtually observing his command, though they do not submerge in water, but pour, sprinkle, or in any other way apply water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. We may look upon the command differently, and decide that they did not baptize at all; yet they themselves, concluding they had received a valid baptism, and feeling that what they did was conscientiously done, virtually answering every purpose of the command, we leave them; to their own Master they stand or fall: but when they attempt to give any other signification than that of an overwhelming or immersion to the word *baptizo*, as used in the New Testament, they weaken their position, so we think.

It ought to be received as an undoubted truth that Jesus delivered himself in terms to be fully comprehended by his apostles and disciples, when he commanded them to baptize. There was nothing doubtful or ambiguous to them, when he enjoined upon them the discharge of certain duties that they were to teach others to observe. He doubtless conveyed a definite signification in the word he used, and such a one

as they fully comprehended; for this reason we find no inquiry by the multitude, who believed and were commanded to be baptized, what it was to be baptized.

There was such a marked observance in delivering the ancient ritual to the Israelites, that there could be no possibility of mistake about what was enjoined; so that Moses could say to the people: "This commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, 'Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?' Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, 'Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?' But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it" (Deuteronomy 30: 11–14). Thus the servant of God declared of the intelligible nature of that which God had commanded: it was in their mouth and in their heart (that is, *I conceive*, in the language they used), their vernacular tongue, conveying right conceptions of God's requirements.

Was, then, the law given by Moses, and all

that the nation had enjoined on them, so intelligible — and shall we suppose that the institutions of the gospel were shut up in a mist, or assumed no definite form, by reason of the ambiguity with which Jesus delivered them? *Impossible.* The Great Master made all clear, and so definite, that there was no doubt in the minds of the apostles as to what they were to do when baptizing.

SECTION V. — THE PRACTICE OF THE APOSTLES AND EARLY DISCIPLES.

The apostles understood their commission — and doubtless they baptized uniformly the same, without deviating in one single instance from the way and manner in which they understood Jesus to imply. They dare not do otherwise than he required of them; and I ask the candid reader of the New Testament, was it by sprinkling, or pouring, or washing, or submerging? for, whichever way it was, *that way they practised*, and but that one way. With such overwhelming evidence in the examples, and with the statements in relation to those examples, it is manifest the mode was that of burying the

candidate, for the ordinance of Christian baptism, in the watery element, *i. e*,. it is so to us.

Having taken this short cut, we come at a rational and philosophical conclusion, and evade the irksome task of wading through those labyrinths of wordy discussions about the prepositions *in* or *into*, and as to what relation they bear to the waters where baptism is said to have been administered by the apostles. Hundreds and hundreds of pages have been written, accomplishing nothing but a play upon the little words of a sentence, while the signification of the whole passage stands out in bold relief, so that a child of common comprehension might laugh such performance to scorn.

Now let the history of the church supply us with some reflections; for it is there, after the closing up of the canon of the New-Testament Scriptures, that we learn of first deviations from the letter of the law of Jesus. We need not regard the history of the church for the first century, as the Scriptures carry us down to that period. From them, therefore, the examples should be gathered, and to them we have referred.

In traversing through ecclesiastical history

of the second century, there is no innovation upon the command given by the Lord Jesus to his apostles. What is said upon the ordinance of baptism, reflects back upon what the apostles practised. Barnabas, Justin Martyr, and others, are definite in what they say. Barnabas remarks: "We go down into the water full of sins and pollution, but come up again bringing forth fruits, having in our hearts the fear and hope which is in Jesus by the Spirit" (Epistle, § 11). Justin Martyr said — in referring to the universal practice of Christians, which he described to the Roman emperor — "Those who believe are led to some place where there is water, and then are bathed in the water" (1 Apology, p. 61).

At the commencement of the third century, we find no deviation from this uniform practice; but, about the middle of it, we have intimation of occasional departure. Inquiry was made of Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, whether those ought to be regarded as legitimate Christians, who, on account of languor and sickness, had not been bathed in salutary water, but only wet with water poured upon them. Here was evidently an innovation upon baptism, suggest-

ed by necessity, but not otherwise tolerated. The reply of the bishop was: "So far as my own humble opinion goes, I do not think that the Divine benefits are in any degree diminished, nor that anything of Divine bounty is at all diminished," &c. (Epist. ad Magnum. Edi. Paris, 1643.) While we see, both in the question and the answer, that there had been a growing into the mystery of iniquity, and that saving benefits were then attached to the ordinance of baptism—so that it was looked upon as something more than when it was administered by the apostles—yet it was evident that the mode of administering the rite was the same—that is, by immersion. A little earlier in this century, we find another kind of innovation, which was that of three immersions in baptism.

In the fourth century, there were not only three immersions, but three invocations. Passing on to the eighth century, it was asked of the pope if "it was lawful, in case of necessity, occasioned by sickness, to baptize an infant by pouring water on its head, from a cup, or the hands," to which he replied, "Such a baptism, performed in such a case of necessity, should be accounted valid" (Apud Labbei Concilia,

tome 6, p. 1650. In the thirteenth century, St. Thomas Aquinas says, "It is safer to baptize by the mode of immersion, because this has custom and usage in its favor;" and, in Article 8, he says: "The minister sins grievously, who baptizes otherwise than by immersion; since he does not observe the rite of the church."

In the fifteenth century, Erasmus says, "With us they have water poured on them in baptism, in England they are dipped;" so that with the Dutch we find the practice of immersion in disuse at this time, but not so in England. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the English church required immersion, except in cases of weakness. It was a little before the closing of the first half of this century that sprinkling was introduced into England. In 1643, it was debated in the assembly of divines at Westminster whether immersion or sprinkling should be adopted as the practice of the church: it was decided in favor of sprinkling, by a vote of twenty-five to twenty-four.

Could anything be more satisfactory in confirmation of the baptism of the first Christians by immersion, than what the history of the church presents? Professor Stewart, though

the advocate for infant sprinkling, says: "The mode of baptism by immersion the oriental church has always continued to preserve, even down to the present time." Now the Greek church embraces a very large portion of Christendom. Dr. Wall remarks, in his "History of Infant Baptism," concerning those who practise immersion, that "all the Christians in Asia, all in Africa, and about one third part of Europe, are of this last sort, in which third part of Europe are comprehended the Christians of Græcia, Thracia, Servia, Bulgaria, Rascia, Wallachia, Moldavia, Russia, Nigra, and so on; and even the Muscovites, who, if the coldness of the country would excuse, might plead for a dispensation with more reason than any."

So much, then, for the practice of the church, and the construction which linguists of all Christian nations have put upon the word *baptizo*. They did not attempt to imply, even long after they had made alterations in God's ordinance, and perverted it, that the Greek word signified what they practised. No—it is the men of very modern times who have turned lexicographers, to give other meanings to words from those formerly understood; but it is very much

better that we should adhere to the original: and, having done so, we may be satisfied that baptism is the submerging the baptized in water, and may confidently let this rest, to investigate another feature of the commission of the Saviour.

SECTION VI. — THE PROPER SUBJECTS FOR BAPTISM.

From the wording of the commission, we should think that the subjects suited for baptism may as clearly be understood as the mode of administering the ordinance. The letter of the commission is: "Go ye, therefore, and *teach all nations, baptizing them* in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28: 19, 20). In Mark 16: 15, 16, it is thus worded: "Go ye into all the world, and *preach the gospel* to every creature. He that *believeth and is baptized*, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." It is evident, from the wording of the commission, that the gospel was first to be preached to the people, then their faith in it was to be declared, and then they were to be bap-

tized; after which, as Christians, they were to be instructed more fully in all things pertaining to the commands of Jesus, which may embrace the whole relating to the grace of salvation, with the doctrines of Christianity.

The very letter of this commission was observed by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. The proceeding of Philip with the eunuch gives a clearness to the particular steps observed by the apostles, in following their commission. Philip preached Christ to the eunuch, showing how the prophecy in Isaiah had been accomplished in the person of Jesus of Nazareth (Isa. 53). The truth was received by faith, and the rite of baptism sought by an inquiry if there could be any impediment to baptism, to which Philip replied, none, if indeed he did believe with all his heart. A ready confession of his faith was then made, and he was baptized.

When Peter enjoined repentance on the multitude before baptism, it was a repentance upon the ground of faith manifested in their concern about the charge of being the murderers of the Lord Jesus Christ: faith in the whole history of Jesus, as the true Messiah, led to the anxious inquiry, "What must we do?" Now it is evi-

dent that teaching came first, which teaching is definite: it is the preaching of the gospel.

The communication of the grace of the gospel was not to be limited to the Jews, as it was before the Jewish dispensation had an end. When Jesus sent out the twelve and the seventy with the express command to proclaim that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, then they were not to go into the way of the Gentiles, nor into any city of the Samaritans; but now they are expressly commanded to "*go into all the world*, and preach the gospel to every creature." Faith was to come by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Therefore, when evidence was given that this teaching was received and cordially and sincerely believed in, for the salvation of the soul, they were to be baptized. Men may reason and write, to the end of time, contrary to this; but, with so plain a commission, it is to us conclusive, apart from every other consideration, that believers' baptism is the one baptism contained in the commission.

They that were to be baptized had been taught —and, as old heads can not be put upon young shoulders, no more can reason be given to babies; for God has ordained that, in the first

stages of humanity, the senses shall have exclusive government; at least till reason has dawned in the infant mind, there can be no teaching those things which require the exercise of reason to embrace: therefore, if Jesus intended that infants should be baptized, he gave a commission which in no way included the idea. Now this must be believed before it can be considered that infants are proper subjects for the baptismal font.

Again, if it were obligatory on parents to bring their children to be baptized, there would be a command for it; but no such command is to be found. The duties of parents are stated definitely enough with regard to their religious responsibilities, but there is nothing even to foster the most distant idea that they are required by the Lord to have their children dedicated to him in baptism; and were it not that a general feeling has possessed the sensitive minds of parents that there were some saving benefits in the ordinance, they could not entertain the idea that it was their duty to seek baptism for their children.

SECTION VII. — BAPTISM PERVERTED IN ITS SIGNIFICATION AND USE.

PALPABLE errors can easily be traced to their origin. Baptism, after the second century, began to be clothed with superstitious notions: it was called "*the salutary water*," and people were told that "the *benefits of God's grace*" came with baptism. It was regarded as washing away guilt, and absolutely necessary to save from Adam's sin. It was then called with great emphasis "*the water of regeneration;*" and it was firmly believed that, in baptism, the individual was renewed by the Holy Ghost. Then it was as confidently asserted, and as implicitly believed, that all who died *unbaptized* were lost, as under the curse of God.

What the priest's lips uttered was regarded, perhaps, as immutable truth, and the sensibilities of the parents were at once fully alive to the best interests of their offspring. We have seen that the innovation was made upon believers' baptism by first administering sprinkling or pouring in cases of dangerous sickness, and then afterward it followed as a general practice.

It is possible that in the present day, throughout Christendom, three fifths of those who practise what is called infant baptism believe that there is no salvation without it; and that to withhold their infants from the baptismal font, or rather from having water administered to them by sprinkling, would be to level themselves with the barbarous heathen. They verily believe, when giving them up in baptism, that there are religious benefits secured for their children should they live, and certain salvation should they die. The other two fifths, perhaps, almost without exception, have adhered to it as a Christian rite, which they are bound to seek for their tender offspring: they think there is a duty incumbent upon them as Christian parents to dedicate their children to the Lord, and that they may hope more reasonably for the Divine blessing upon them if they attend to their baptism.

Now, baptism is no dedication. When parents, who are really devoted Christians themselves, consider that to take their offspring in earnest prayer and faith to the Lord is the best and only dedication they can make of them, and that under the Christian dispensation no benefit

can be secured to them by any religious ceremony, in the same way as civil, national, and legal religious benefits were secured by circumcision to the offspring of the Jews, it is to be hoped that many will yield up that which is only a perversion of the ordinance of baptism, seeing that they are more likely to incur displeasure than approval from the Lord when they professedly bring them to an ordinance not instituted for them.

We have somewhat digressed, in following out this feature of innovation upon the Christian ordinance of baptism, before fairly considering the practice of the apostles of Christ in due order after noticing the wording of the commission. Reverting to that, we shall discover how far there can be any justification of the supposition that they understood other baptisms to be intended for their practice and observance, besides what the wording of the command sets forth.

In the first place, no mention is made of the baptism of infants; in the next place, no inference can be gathered, from any of the practices of the apostles or disciples, that they did baptize them. Questions have been created about

the baptized households, and all suggestions of a supposititious nature have been fully written on, as a pretext for infant baptism; but all this has been entirely exploded, so as not to require any further remark, but that learned and sage pedobaptists, who have written upon this feature of the discussion, have admitted that *it amounts to what may be regarded as certain*, that the baptized of those households spoken of in the New Testament were *none of them infants*, but were all of them such as could both *act* for themselves and *believe* the message of the apostles and disciples. In the third place, did the apostles enjoin any such duty upon parents? If they understood, from the commission, that baptized parents were to have all their children baptized, certainly in some of their writings we should find some allusion to it. They enjoined duties on parents, which they have fully understood, and which even Nature might have taught them without religion; therefore they did not, as some have supposed, omit to enjoin it upon the ground that parents were well acquainted with it.

Is it possible that so much could have been said in the New Testament about baptism, and

nothing about this vast multitude of children being baptized, if indeed they were baptized? It would have been a strange event in the history of parents, if they could have gone with their little, and in some cases numerous tribes, to have them baptized, without creating some excitement, which might incidentally, at least, have called forth remarks in the writings of the apostles. Surely no one who knows human nature at all will believe that this could have been done so quietly and secretly as not to leave a trace to bear witness that it was done at all.

The language of the commission, and the practice of the apostles and disciples of the Lord Jesus, are demonstrable proof that no baptism was authorized or known in the first century of the Christian era but the baptism of believers, as verbally contained in the direction which Jesus gave to his apostles. After that time, we have to depend upon ecclesiastical history for information; and it is not a little matter of satisfaction to baptists, on coming to a dispassionate decision, that there is no such thing as infant baptism in the New Testament—to find that learned pedobaptists, who have labored hard to defend their practice, have con-

fessed that there is neither "*express precept nor example*" for it in the Bible. Even Luther says of infant baptism, though he defended and practised it—"It can not be proved by the sacred Scriptures that infant baptism was instituted by Christ, or begun by the first Christians after the apostles."

In the first half of the second century, there is no evidence that infant baptism was known. Some have, without foundation, asserted that Justin Martyr and Irenæus (both of this century) admitted that infant baptism had been brought into practice; but nothing can be found in their writings to substantiate it. Tertullian at the close of this century wrote, and alluded to the baptism of "little ones," and he opposed the baptism of such. He says: "It is, therefore, most expedient to defer baptism, and to regulate the administration of it according to the condition, the disposition, and the age, of the person to be baptized—and especially in the case of the little ones" (Robinson's "History of Baptism," p. 175). Curcellœus says: "The baptism of infants, in the first two centuries after Christ, was altogether unknown; but in the third and fourth was allowed by some few. In

the fifth and following ages, it was generally received. The custom of baptizing infants did not begin before the third age after Christ was born" (Inst. Relig. Christ., lib. i., cxii.). Rhienwald says (p. 313): "The first traces of infant baptism are found in the western church, after the middle of the second century, and it was the subject of controversy in proconsular Africa toward the end of this century. Though its necessity was asserted in Africa and Egypt, in the beginning of the third century, it was even to the end of the fourth century by no means universally observed—least of all in the eastern church. Notwithstanding the recommendation of it by the fathers, it never became a general ecclesiastical institution till the age of Augustine." In Professor Hahn's "Theology," p. 557, we read: "Neither in the Scripture, nor during the first hundred and fifty years, is a sure example of infant baptism to be found; and we must concede that the numerous opposers of it can not be contradicted on gospel ground."

It is unnecessary to traverse through succeeding centuries to notice the practice of the church, and the perpetual disputation occasioned by innovation upon the primitive institution of bap-

tism. Let it suffice that the most able men who have written upon the controversy, and in favor of infant baptism, have yielded such concessions as those we have recorded. It seems to be in the spirit of triumphant exultation that Bossuet, the most able of the Roman catholic controversialists of his time, in referring to the controversy between Luther and his followers with the baptists, says: "Experience has shown that all the attempts of the reformed to confound the anabaptists by the Scriptures have been weak, and therefore they are at last obliged to allege to them the practice of the church" (Stennet to Russen).

SECTION VIII. — THE THINGS SIGNIFIED IN BAPTISM.

We have seen that baptism, as a symbolic ordinance in use under the Christian dispensation, was of necessity an ordinance of Christ's instituting. It was not given from heaven by the Father, but by Christ upon earth, as the risen Saviour, the Lawgiver, and Head of the church, the sole Founder of the Christian dispensation. It was given by him to be an institution of his dispensation, not to be abrogated after the days of the

apostles, but to be perpetuated to succeeding generations. It was an ordinance so clearly made known by the Almighty Saviour in his commission, when he authorized its practice, that it could not be mistaken; and in all the departures from it, and the controversies which have sprung from forsaking it, there has been no attempt on the part of enlightened pedobaptists to deny the fact that, what Christ commissioned his disciples to do, and what apparently they uniformly practised, was, to baptize those who had first been taught, or who at least acknowledged their belief, that Jesus was the Christ: they were then baptized by immersion. Dr. Thomas Chalmers observes, in his lecture on Romans 6: 3–7: "The original meaning of the word 'baptism' is *immersion;* and though we regard it as a point of indifference whether the ordinance so named be performed in this way or by sprinkling, yet we doubt not that the prevalent style of the administration in the apostles' days, was by the actual submerging of the whole body in water."

The things signified in Christian baptism are of vast moment: the ordinance in itself is nothing without it. It comes in with the first sin-

cere profession of Christianity, and symbolizes what has taken place in the character of the baptized, and the power by which that change has been effected. In the contention about baptism, it is certain this main feature is lost sight of; and then baptism is nothing in the estimation of the Lawgiver, any more than was the ceremony under the law, when the rightly-appointed beast in sacrifice was offered without the heart being right in the service of God; for it is said, "He that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck."

Baptism signifies the answer of a good conscience toward God; the sincerity of the soul of a believer in what is symbolized, viz., a death unto sin, and a life unto righteousness; a burial with Christ into his death, and a resurrection into newness of life; a planting in the likeness of his death, and a likeness also of his resurrection. It is in this sense it can be said, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;" he is a spiritual man, and lives to God.

But this is not all in baptism. While this is symbolized in the act of baptism itself, there is something in the element which is also symbolical. There is very great danger here of stop-

ping short of the whole of that which is represented in the believer's baptism. The Christian dispensation is emphatically the dispensation of the Spirit; and we are bold to affirm, what has been before implied, that an essential feature of Christian baptism is wanting if the blessed Spirit's office and work are omitted. For this reason it is palpably plain that no baptism, properly called Christian baptism, could have been administered before the day of pentecost.

What! represent in a principle of Christian baptism that which did not exist at the time, in the manner represented? *This* mighty change in man, when he savingly believes in Jesus—*this* death and burial with Christ felt in his soul, and *this* coming forth into a new and spiritual life, with holy desires longing for God, seeking more and more of spirituality, engaging in all spiritual exercises—in fact, this new creation is *what?* If not demonstrably the great work of the Spirit in the Christian dispensation, decipher the mystery. If it were possible to take any other view of it, we should be compelled to adopt the monstrous error of baptismal regeneration, and of course should then affirm, as consistent reasoners, that the Spirit

in the Christian dispensation, upon which Jesus laid so much stress, was a superfluity. But we spurn such abuse and blasphemy. It is the simple principle and support of Christianity, that *the Spirit* is the mighty and blessed agent in all the *change* wrought in the soul of man, making him a *genuine Christian;* and that baptism equally sets forth the mighty power effecting the transformation, and also the change itself passed upon the soul. These two must be combined, or baptism is a dead letter.

Baptism is a very blessed and important symbolical ordinance, when observed in the true spirit of its most glorious Author. It seems amazing that any Christian, who has not submitted to it in the way and manner instituted by Christ, can hold back from it. Such an outward setting forth of the triumphs of Divine mercy and grace in our restoration to God and to the image of his moral perfections, seems stamped with Divine authorship. None but Jesus could have ordained it; and every innovation upon the letter of the institution seems to mar it, as much as any deviation from the pattern of the tabernacle, showed to Moses in the mount, would have marred that wondrous

structure. Not that this remark is intended to imply that Jesus gave a like injunction to that given to Moses, when he said, "See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed thee in the mount."

SECTION IX. — CLOSING REFLECTIONS.

In bringing this review of the Christian ordinance of baptism to its close, it is, of course, manifest that many considerations pressing upon the mind, connected with it, have not been touched; the embarrassing feeling has been, to decide what would best fall in to make the institution appear as definite, according to the mind of its blessed Author, as possible. But, after all that has been said, we must ever set a watch upon our feelings, lest we remove this ordinance from its right place, or destroy its signification by attaching either more or less to it than that which the Lord designed.

It is no saving ordinance, and it is a fearful error to esteem it such. This idea, alas! has been too extensively cherished, and relied on, for the welfare of the church universal. Even where such error is discountenanced, it has some-

how or other engendered something of its essence or spirit, so that the ordinance is looked at beyond the simple design of Jesus in commanding it.

It is no doctrine of the Christian dispensation —it is not a thing to be believed in to the salvation of the soul. To bring it to the position of any one of the doctrines of saving faith, would be as erroneous, on the one hand, as to reject it altogether from a place in the Christian dispensation, on the other. The altering it from its original is not to be considered as an error equal to a rejection or perversion of some fundamental doctrine of Christianity.

Too much stress has always been laid upon baptism from the earliest period of uninspired church history. It was soon regarded as an efficacious ordinance. It was conceived that baptismal water had that virtue which is only to be found in the blood of Christ for washing away sin, and that virtue which is only with the Holy Spirit in regeneration. It merely symbolizes that which, alas! in itself it was soon believed to accomplish; that is, the change in state and feelings of the regenerate soul. Now it is evident that this leaven of heresy has

pretty much leavened the whole lump, inasmuch as, with all Christian denominations, too much is thought of baptism; it is raised up out of its place, and other things necessary to salvation are often passed over in comparison with this.

Baptism is not a *sine qua non* in the Christian dispensation, with all the labor of man to make it such. In the Scriptures of the New Testament it stands a simple, independent ordinance, *one* and but one of the things which Christ has enjoined upon his disciples. Truly it is a symbolical ordinance, and one, as we have said, setting forth some most blessed and inspiring truths; but, after all, symbolical institutions are secondary, and have no more claim to be enforced than any and every one of the relative duties of Christianity.

Let us regard with affectionate and due interest all that Christ has enjoined. True, genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the covenant relation which he sustains, as the only Saviour of sinners, renders an individual eligible to be a candidate for baptism, and for every other privilege and duty of the Christian dispensation, and he that denies this frustrates the grace of God.

If faith be the prerequisite to baptism, as a Christian duty and privilege, it is so to all that is enjoined upon the believer. So, then, baptism can be no prerequisite to another privilege or duty of the Christian dispensation: else baptism is the prerequisite to faith—that is, the prerequisite to that which was its own prerequisite—which not only frustrates the grace of God, but is an absurdity.

Now, all this misconception has evidently sprung out of the idea of baptismal regeneration, though advocated by many who denounce an error so gross as that water should possess virtue of itself to renew a soul.

That God may in infinite mercy save us from error, recover us where we have departed from truth, and make us steadfast in every good word and work, is a prayer we all need to offer continually; while, under a sense of our own imperfection, we shall in humility display the true Christian spirit wherever we see the image of Jesus, and not persecute and despise those who conscientiously can not see eye to eye with us.

PART III.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

SECTION I.—PREPARATION FOR THE PASCHAL SUPPER.

IMMEDIATELY connected with the passover-feast we have the institution of the Lord's Supper; and, by some reference to the preparation for eating this Jewish feast, we shall arrive at the important symbolical ordinance which is to pass under our review, in its design and bearings.

The mind becomes impressed with a hallowed solemnity—a commingled feeling of pleasurable sacredness and sobriety fills the soul—in approaching an ordinance, the substance of which fills heaven and earth with solemn admiration and praise.

Our thoughts now recur to events which his-

tory records of places and things more than eighteen hundred years ago, when the inhabitants of Jerusalem were in all the excitement of preparation to commemorate one of the three great national festivals which gave a distinctive feature to their history, and the date of a new epoch of time. It was the feast of the passover.

The institution of the passover, together with all the observances which God enjoined upon the Israelites for its commemoration, have direct bearing upon the institution of the Lord's Supper, and the latter has been given to supersede the former; so that, in many respects, the feast of the Lord's Supper is to the Christian what the feast of the passover was to the Jew. Paul exhorts Christians to "purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5: 7, 8). Such an allusion to the passover, as typical of the sacrifice of Christ, leads us to consider the circumstances of that institution in its general features, as setting forth that which re-

lates to the dispensation of God's grace by Jesus Christ.

The inhabitants of Jerusalem, in making preparations for the celebration of the feast of the passover, provided suitable domestic apparatus, either entirely new vessels for cooking-purposes, or they brought out those that had been dedicated solely to the feast of the passover, and had been safely laid aside, from the time of the foregoing feast. It was with great carefulness that they observed the command to remove all leaven from their houses. In addition to these things, there were not less, perhaps, than two hundred and fifty thousand lambs pent up, to be examined, as fit to be offered in sacrifice, for the paschal feast. But, at the time to which we refer, there was *one Lamb* to be led to the slaughter, whose *one sacrifice* should eclipse the whole of the countless numbers which had been legally slain from the memorable night of the passover, in Egypt, to that time; and be so vicarious to all generations, as that the senseless, innocent lamb should never more be required, and all typical feasts and sacrifices be abolished for ever: —

"'Tis Christ, the heavenly Lamb, takes all our sins away."

Jesus was not less interested about the approaching feast than any devout Jew in Jerusalem, as the following colloquy between him and his disciples will prove. We read in Luke 22: 8–13: "He sent Peter and John, saying, 'Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat.' And they said unto him, 'Where wilt thou that we prepare?' And he said unto them, 'Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in. And ye shall say unto the good man of the house, "The Master saith unto thee, 'Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?'" And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready.' And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover."

The Mosaic dispensation had not then seen its end, but the eve of its dissolution had arrived. Jesus was made under the law, and felt bound to fulfil all the moral and ceremonial enactments of Heaven. Every moral and religious duty that devolved upon the people, *he* rigorously discharged, as the fulfiller of all righ-

teousness, until by his death he himself should become the end of the law for all righteousness to every one that believeth. The disciples made ready for keeping the feast, little anticipating how it was to end.

SECTION II. — THE ASSEMBLED COMPANY AT SUPPER.

JESUS and the twelve apostles proceeded to this upper chamber; and *it was there*, when finishing an ordinary meal, or the paschal supper (there have been differences of opinion about which it was), that he said: "*With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer; for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.*"

There has been much written in favor and much against the circumstance of Christ eating this passover. Some have concluded that the preparation was made, but the feast not celebrated, as it was the night before the appointed time for keeping the feast, and that Christ actually died on Calvary at the very time appointed for killing the lambs for the paschal sacrifice: consequently that they could only have

partaken of a common meal in the upper chamber, when he disclosed to them the feelings with which he hailed this approaching feast, and even his own sufferings in all that was designed to be set forth by it.

It would be foreign to our present object to enter upon the investigation of this particular, interesting as it might be. We shall, therefore, briefly state what appears to be a solution of the circumstances which have furnished matter for the discussion, and pass on to the subject in hand. The Jews were guided by the appearance of the new moon, for counting the days of the month; and it so happened, that sometimes they were not so certain about the appearance, so that, in reckoning, there was a difficulty in fixing on one of two days. Such may have arisen at that period, and then it was allowable to keep the passover two days successively. It may be that the Jews generally fixed on the latter of the two, but Jesus may have decided to keep it on the first, which perhaps he might have known to be the one corresponding with the first keeping of it in Egypt. This, then, would have really brought Jesus to the house, and he would have kept the feast with his apos-

tles, as we should understand he did, from what Luke records; and then, at the time when the Jews would have been offering up the paschal lambs in sacrifice on the following day, Christ expired on the cross. We can not pause to expatiate on the Divine providence in all this, but the circumstances will at once impress our minds with the glorious displays of its admirable workings in these events. It is probable, in that year, that the multitude of the Jews were not able to keep the feast; and if some did not on the day before, when we suppose Jesus did, it is likely that, though the preparation was made, no feast was kept.

In Dr. Adam Clarke's notes at the close of Matthew 26, he says: "It is more than probable that the passover was not eaten in the whole land of Judea on this occasion. The rending of the vail of the temple (Matt. 27: 51; Mark 15: 38; Luke 23: 45), the terrible earthquake (Matt. 27: 51–54), the dismal and unnatural darkness which was over the whole land of Judea from the sixth hour (twelve o'clock) to the ninth hour (that is, three o'clock in the afternoon), with all the other prodigies which took place on this awful occasion, we may naturally conclude were

more than sufficient to terrify and appall this guilty nation, and totally prevent the celebration of the paschal ceremonies. Indeed, the time in which the killing of the sacrifices, and the sprinkling of the blood of the lambs, should have been performed, was wholly occupied with the most dreadful portents; and it would be absurd to suppose that, under such terrible evidences of the Divine indignation, any religious ordinances or festive preparations could possibly have taken place."

We return from this digression to contemplate Jesus and his apostles in the upper chamber. There, whether he ate a common meal, or the real paschal supper, we view him as having commanded all the preparation to celebrate the institution of the passover; and at the close of that supper he thus addressed his apostles: "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer; for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." It is very important to observe how every feature of this commemorative feast is typical of its antitype. "Christ our passover is slain for us."

The institution of the Lord's Supper was de-

signed to keep the true paschal sacrifice, and has been religiously observed by Christians almost generally from its ordination down to the present time. It answers spiritually the same end and purposes that were answered literally, ceremonially, and typically, by the ancient Jewish paschal feast. Therefore it may be that we shall often have occasion to revert in the following pages to the end and design of certain things in that significant institution, and then look to the Christian institution for its corresponding features, the one serving to illustrate and point out what is designed in the other. Thus, we shall understand that, when the Lord said of the passover, that it should be "an ordinance for ever," is set forth first, in the paschal lamb typically, the deliverance by Christ till the passion and death of Christ; and then, henceforward, the Lord's Supper, in which bread and wine, taken symbolically in commemoration of his crucifixion, should be the continual representatives of that sacrifice to the end of the world.

SECTION III. — THE INSTITUTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

THE Lord's Supper, or the antitypical passover, was instituted immediately upon eating in the upper chamber with the twelve, where the preparation had been made for the passover. Before the institution of the ordinance, the whole of the twelve being then present, Jesus said, "Verily, I say unto you, one of you shall betray me." The remark at once filled the disciples with sorrow and concern, each apparently fearful lest he should be the monster. At last, Jesus pointed out the one, by the answer given to his question — "Master, is it I?" Jesus replied, "Thou hast said." Having been dismissed by the Saviour, Judas entered upon his diabolical design without delay, though apparently none of the disciples understood for what purpose he had left the assembly, they supposing that the object of his business was to purchase some things needful for them.

But now, alone with the eleven, Jesus in affecting language solemnly proceeds to ordain the sacred feast, to symbolize his death. It is

recorded: "Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said: 'Take, eat; this is my body.' And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying: 'Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom'" (Matt. 26: 26–29).

Some have been of opinion that Judas had not left the company at the administration of the Lord's Supper; they consider their opinion confirmed by Luke, who, having related our Saviour's words at its institution, says that Jesus added, "The hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table." But it is easy to suppose that Luke, in his narration, may have passed on from describing the supper to the institution of the eucharist, without stopping to inform us of what Jesus said concerning Judas, and then afterward referred to that saying. It is certain the other evangelists lead us to the conclusion that what took place between Judas and the Saviour was at the supper, and that,

after his departure, the Lord proceeded to dispense the memorials of his body and blood.

Calmet closes his remarks upon the opinion of Judas being present at the institution of the Lord's Supper with the following sentences: "It is, therefore, evident that Judas went out during the paschal supper, but the eucharist was not instituted till after the paschal supper had been concluded; and the last action of that supper was what gave opportunity to the institution of the new rite. To suppose that Jesus would give to Judas the sacramental cup in token of his blood, 'shed for the remission of sins'—of sins which Judas had traitorously committed, or which he designed traitorously to commit, is to trifle with this most solemn subject; and, indeed, is a contradiction to the evangelist, who says, 'When he [Judas] was gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of man glorified,"' &c. He then warned Peter of his frailty, and all his disciples of their instability," &c.

SECTION IV. — THE ELEMENTS USED AT THE LORD'S SUPPER.

It is necessary that we should consider what elements Jesus used in this symbolical feast. They were two, bread and wine, and were probably among the things which had been provided when Peter and John went to make ready for celebrating the feast of the passover.

The question is, 'What kind of bread was this that our Saviour used?' To such a question the answer is perfectly clear, that it was unleavened bread, though some have disputed it. At that time there could have been no other bread in all Judea, it being the first day of unleavened bread, when the Jews, according to the command of God, were to purge away all leaven from their houses; and, to have disobeyed the command, would have incurred the penalty of being cut off from the congregation of Israel: and, as we have seen, Peter and John had there, by express command of Jesus, made ready to keep the passover.

The allusion of Paul to the Divinely-instituted custom of removing all leaven previously

to the paschal feast, is very significant, when exhorting the Corinthians to put away those who were engaged in wickedness, and contrary to true religion and sincerity in the service of Christ: "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5: 6–8).

We can not doubt, then, about what bread the Saviour used in the institution of this ordinance. Nor can we question for a moment but that unleavened bread was the most suited, as typical of the body of Christ, which was free from any contaminating or corrupting principle; but that it was used with such a design we can not say. It was the bread then at hand, and the only kind in use: therefore it is not so easy to say that any importance should be attached to it.

But as the ordinance is symbolical, and the bread used in it designed to set forth the body

of Christ, it might be deemed preferable to use unleavened bread for commemorating the Lord's Supper, though not with any superstitious feeling, such as the papal church indulges, for their wafer is a perversion of the common signification of eating bread; and their doctrine of transubstantiation is an exhibition of enthusiasm amounting to insanity.

There is, perhaps, something worthy of our serious consideration in what Dr. Adam Clarke has said upon this subject. He remarks: "Now if any respect should be paid to the primitive institution, in the celebration of this Divine ordinance, then unleavened, unyeasted bread should be used. In every sign or type, the thing *signifying* or pointing out that which is *beyond* itself should either have certain *properties*, or be accompanied with certain *circumstances*, as *expressive as possible* of the thing *signified*. *Bread*, simply considered in itself, may be an emblem apt enough of the *body* of our Lord Jesus, which was given for us; but the design of God was evidently that it should not only point out this, but also the *disposition* required in those who should celebrate both the *antitype* and the *type;* and this the apostle explains to

be *sincerity* and *truth*, the reverse of *malice* and *wickedness*. The very *taste* of the bread was instructive: it pointed out to every communicant, that he who came to the table of God with *malice* or *ill-will* against any soul of man, or with *wickedness*, a profligate or sinful life, might expect to eat and drink judgment to himself, as not discerning that the Lord's body was sacrificed for this very purpose, *that all sin might be destroyed;* and that sincerity *(eikli-rimia)*, such purity as *the clearest light can discern no stain in*, might be diffused through the whole soul; and that *truth*, the law of righteousness and true holiness, might regulate and guide all the actions of life. Had the bread used on these occasions been of the *common* kind, it would have been perfectly unfit, or improper, to have communicated these *uncommon significations;* and as it was *seldom* used, its rare occurrence would make the emblematical representation more deeply impressive, and the *sign*, and the thing *signified*, have their due correspondence and influence.

"These circumstances considered, will it not appear that the use of *common bread* in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is highly improper?

He who can say, '*This is a matter of no importance*,' may say, with equal propriety, 'The *bread* itself is of no importance;' and another may say, 'The *wine* is of no importance;' and a third may say, '*Neither* the *bread* nor *wine* is anything, but as they lead to *spiritual* references, and the spiritual references being once understood, the signs are useless.' Thus we may, through affected spirituality, refine away the whole ordinance of God; and, with the *letter* and *form* of religion, abolish religion itself. Many have already acted in this way, not only to their loss, but to their ruin, by showing how profoundly wise they are above what is written. Let those, therefore, who consider that *man shall live by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God*, and who are conscientiously solicitous that each Divine institution be, not only preserved, but observed in all its original integrity, attend to this circumstance. The *Lutheran* church makes use of unleavened bread to the present day."

Wine was the other element introduced at the time of the institution of this ordinance—whether red or white, it is not said. The best wine was ordered to be used at the passover, and the red generally was esteemed such. In

the absence of direct proof, it is more reasonable to come to the conclusion that it was red, the pure blood of the grape—that which was suited to bear so far the true resemblance of blood, designed to typify the blood of Jesus Christ. Some have concluded that it was mixed with water. So early as Justin Martyr's time, this had come into use, and superstitious and fanciful notions have been entertained about its representing the blood and water which flowed from the side of Christ when pierced; but with these opinions we have nothing to do. Jesus tells us the wine symbolized his blood, and this is enough for us to contemplate in the wine.

Of these two elements, Dr. John Gill thus writes: "Now the bread and the wine, being two separate articles, may denote and show forth the death of Christ: the body or flesh being separated from the blood, and the blood from that in which the life is, death follows; and these being distinctly attended to, is expressive of that separation; and yet both together make a feast, and afford nourishment, refreshment, and delight. With food there must be drink, and when with bread, wine—both made a banquet."

SECTION V. — THE FORM OF ADMINISTERING THE BREAD.

In this feature of the sacred rite to which our attention is now directed, every word strikes us as of importance, and, when connected in their sentences, give the full force of the true design of the institution.

Three of the evangelists describe it in their gospels, and they sweetly harmonize in their accounts. They clearly prove how they regarded the institution of that wondrous feast — in which they endeavor to give the sentences as uttered by the lips of the Saviour. Added to these descriptions, we have an account by Paul, so distinct in all its parts, and orderly in its arrangement, that, as we read his account, the event seems as reacted before us. He says: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, 'Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.' After the same manner also he took the

cup, when he had supped, saying, 'This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.'" To the above, Paul, as an inspired apostle of Jesus Christ, and of course by the Spirit of inspiration directing him, adds: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Cor. 11: 23–29).

The first act was to take the bread, bless it, or give thanks and break it. He took it and made it the symbol of his own body, not by any literal formation or likeness—it was still bread in his hands, the unleavened bread as used for the passover. Let his taking it into his own hands lead us to think of the voluntary offering of himself a sacrifice unto God. He blessed it, or gave thanks. From the circumstance of its being found, in Matthew's gospel, that "He

blessed it," some have thought that he did bless the bread, and this was sanctifying it to the use to which it was to be applied; but it is not so. The word *it* should not have been supplied—it ought not to have been there. He *blessed God*, or gave *thanks to God*, is the true intent of the passage.

Jesus here followed the constant Jewish custom of acknowledging God as the author of every good and perfect gift, by giving thanks on taking the bread, and also, afterward, on taking the cup. Every Jew was forbidden to eat, drink, or use any of God's creatures, without rendering him thanks; and he who acted contrary to this command, was considered as a person who was guilty of sacrilege. On taking the bread, they say, "*Blessed be thou, our God, the King of the universe, who bringest forth bread out of the earth!*" And, on taking the cup, they say, "*Blessed be thou, our God, the King of the universe, the Creator of the fruit of the vine!*"

He "brake it"—that is, the bread, which was thin, hard, and brittle; it needed not a knife to cut it, and a knife was never used for such purpose by the Jews. But little is thought of this

act: it is considered of no importance in what way the bread first appears on the Lord's table; and, for convenience, it is generally cut into pieces, the administrator thinking it sufficient to divide these pieces into smaller ones, and in some instances to dispense even with that act. But it can not be dispensed with in the rightful administration, for the bread in its first appearance on the table is symbolical, and in its broken pieces is symbolical. The bread, of whatever shape or size, should be a whole loaf, not cut or pared in any way. In this bread, the Lord first presented his whole body—not yet bruised nor broken for the sin of man, but free from any bruised, or pierced, or divided form, and then not fit to be eaten, as not being of any nourishing or saving benefit to sinners. But, in breaking it, he showed forth what he was to suffer in making atonement upon Calvary; and it appears to be a very important feature in the ordinance that this should be solemnly attended to, in the presence of the assembled communicants: let them see, by the symbol, the whole body, and so have communion with Christ in his death and sufferings. And, were it only from one of the names by which this wondrous

institution, as a symbolical act, is often designated by inspired penmen in the Scriptures, namely, "breaking of bread," it were enough for every administrator duly to observe it.

The bread being broken, we have its distribution and address to the receivers. "He gave it to his disciples." It was a gift; and who can contemplate the mercy and grace made known in this gift, without being inspired with love and gratitude to the Giver? He "gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God," and he gave himself to his people, that in all the riches of his glory, the magnitude of his perfections, the completeness of his obedience, and the intenseness of his agonies, he might be theirs. The wealth of worlds could not purchase what this broken bread set forth as given to the disciples. No powers could have effected the surrender, which was the voluntary act of our blessed Jesus, when "he who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." All the blessings of God to man are set forth in this gift, wherein the broken body of Christ is symbolized in this broken bread, distributed by the hand of the dear Redeemer. The act was voluntary, the

grace amazing, the worth beyond all price, and the blessing infinite.

But hear the address with which the gift was accompanied: "Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me." In the immediate prospect of his agony and bloody sweat, his cross and passion, did the dear Lord and Saviour thus blessedly set forth the mystery, and in this strain of compassion did he address the disciples.

The receiving and eating the broken bread are nothing, even when taken in the prescribed form of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, unless faith discerns the mysteries intended to be conveyed thereby; faith must discover that which is spiritual in every word and every act. It is Christ's body, not literally, as we have before observed—the bread is bread still—it is broken bread to show forth a broken Christ, and this with a definite object—"*broken*," says the Saviour, "*for you.*" The substitutionary death of Christ is here plainly declared—he died for his people; and who can thus commemorate the Lord's Supper without having the Eye upon him! *He is remembered;* the whole scene of his humiliation, and suffering, and death, passes

as in review before the contemplative mind; and the condescension, love, and grace, of the Lord Jesus Christ, fixes the adoring spirit, while it exclaims, '*He gave himself for me!*'

SECTION VI. — THE FORM OF ADMINISTERING THE WINE.

Jesus proceeded to take the cup, after his distribution of the bread, and address to the apostles, and in the same way as with the bread he proceeded to give thanks to God.

Whether the grapes had long been bruised and compressed in the wine-vat, and the liquid wrung out, or whether done at that time, and forced out into the cup for use, we are not informed; therefore the particulars relating to the wine, further than what is declared by the evangelists, is not of importance for us to know, and we can safely leave all considerations and inquiries, that may arise connected with it, as unprofitable speculation.

He took the cup into his own hands and gave thanks. It was the symbol of his blood. It was not for his own comfort or consolation or salvation that he held it in his hands and

thanked God. No—the cup of trembling and of wrath was for him; the cup he was about to drink contained a terrible draught, indeed, as Justice put it into his hand that same night, in the garden of Gethsemane, when prostrate with his face to the ground, he prayed these affecting words: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." And again: "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." The cup of poison was put into his hand; it contained the deadly draught, which we merited by sin, but he took it for us and drank it to the very dregs in his death. But in this institution of mercy, he takes into his hands the cup of mercy for man, and thanks God for such a cup: though symbolical of his own blood in death, yet it was the cup of salvation to give to his people.

He gave it to his disciples, saying: "Drink ye all of it. For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." It is with apparent empha-

sis that the Saviour enjoins the personal, individual act of drinking: "*Drink ye all of it.*" It is therefore not one of the elements only, but both, which are to be taken in the Lord's Supper—the cup being essential to this solemn feast; and it appears to be distinguished and marked by our Lord, that (if we may so speak) it should be regarded as the very essence of the institution.

The paraphrase of the original wording of this part of the address of the Saviour, by Dr. Adam Clarke, is particularly expressive: "*For* THIS *is* THAT *blood of mine*, which was pointed out by all the sacrifices under the Jewish law, and particularly by the shedding and sprinkling of the blood of the paschal lamb; THAT *blood* of the sacrifice slain for the ratification *of the new covenant;* THE *blood* ready to be *poured out for the multitudes*, the whole Gentile world as well as the Jews, *for the taking away of sins—sin*, whether original or actual, in all its *power* and *guilt*, in all its internal *energy* and *pollution.*"

The cup was the symbol, in Christ's blood, of the new testament. *New testament* means no other than the *new covenant.* The legal or old covenant was sealed by the blood of the beasts

offered up to God in sacrifice, and was only for the ceremonial and outward purification, and remission of sins. But the new covenant, often distinguished by the title "covenant of grace," was sealed and established by the death of Christ, through whom alone spiritually men can draw nigh unto God.

Dr. Lightfoot remarks upon this expression of the Saviour, that "this my blood of the new testament" is "not only the *seal* of the covenant, but the *sanction* of the new covenant; the end of the *Mosaic* economy, and the confirming of a *new* one. The confirmation of the *old* covenant was by the *blood of bulls and goats* (Exodus 24—Hebrews 9), because blood was still to be shed: the confirmation of the *new* was by *a cup of wine*, because under the new covenant there is no further shedding of blood. As it is here said of the cup, '*This cup is the new testament in my blood*,' so it might be said of the cup of blood (Exodus 24), '*That cup was the old testament in the blood of Christ.*'"

It was blood "which was shed for many," or "poured out for many," that the cup of wine symbolized. Here the significant act of the sacrifice of lambs, whose blood was poured out

at the foot of the altar, comes before our view. The work of blood-shedding formed a considerable part of the priests' office, generation after generation. Paul observes: "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9: 22). Christ was God's lamb, the one of his own appointing to be offered up in sacrifice; and in contemplation of this, the inspired prophet says: "We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted;" and again, "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth;" also, again, "He hath poured out his soul unto death" (Isaiah 53: 4, 7, 12).

Can we look into Gethsemane on that memorable night, and see the immaculate *Lamb of God*, bound by law and justice, and, as in the agonies of death, witness the blood in large drops pouring down this mystic sacrifice, after that the heavenly Father had said, as foretold in prophetic language by Zechariah (13: 7)— "'Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow,' saith the Lord of hosts"—and not understand the import of what the precious Saviour set forth, when he

said, "This is my blood of the new testament, which is poured out for many"? O that our comprehensions may not only embrace the truth conveyed, but that our dull, cold hearts may be quickened to go forth in the warmth of devout affection to that blessed Jesus, "who gave himself an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savor," when "he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors; and bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors"!

It was for *many* that he *shed* or *poured* out his blood. To the *many* we are fully justified in adding *people* or *nations*. The sacrifice of Christ was not confined to one nation, as were the ceremonial sacrifices under the law. When the paschal lamb was slain in Egypt, it was not observed beyond the boundary of the habitations of the Israelites. The blood of the victim was not sprinkled upon the door-posts or lintels of any other houses but those inhabited by the Israelites. The destroying angel that night had respect to none other in Egypt but the houses bearing the signs of blood as prescribed, and no others went free to serve the Lord but those whom he spared. But now, in the antitypical

paschal sacrifice — in Christ our passover slain for us — we have *many* nations. The prophet emphatically marks this out as a distinctive feature in Christ's sufferings and death: "So shall he sprinkle many nations" (Isaiah 52: 15). His blood and his gospel are for all who believe among the nations of the earth.

He states that the definite object in the shedding of his blood for many was, "for the remission of sins." Sin, in the Scriptures, is often spoken of as the obligation of a debt. Sin committed was the act of incurring certain obligations to God, for which the law of God held the sinner responsible. The law relaxes nothing, but demands the full payment, which is impossible for the sinner to make. Let us, for the sake of illustration, suppose a case that neither does, nor from the nature of things can exist: let us suppose an individual having once sinned, but retaining the entire power to lead a perfect life, and never more to transgress against God: the individual, by such a course, could not relieve himself from former obligation.

Such is the true nature of "remission of sins;" therefore remission was often referred to the sabbatical year, the year of jubilee, when all in

the land of Judea were released from their obligations. The one who had sold himself was no longer in bondage—he became a free man; and they who had sold their estates had them again restored. It was the law of God: "Ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you, and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family" (Leviticus 25: 10). "*Aphesis*," rendered "remission," signifies *to announce liberty to the captive, to release the obligation of a debt.* But "the remission of sins" was not to be a favor shown by the violation of law, or at the expense of justice; therefore, both in the Old Testament and in the New, it is connected with sacrifice. Paul, in referring to the blood of the sacrifice under the law, says, "Without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9: 22)—that is, until the proper sacrifices were offered, the priest could not pronounce the transgressor free from the consequences of his transgressions. So, under the gospel dispensation, which the Mosaic typified: the Lamb was offered up—*that Lamb*, the Lord Jesus Christ, called "the Lamb of God,

which taketh away the sin of the world." Full satisfaction was given to law and justice, and God's honor and glory were maintained, by such an infinite sacrifice as the person of God's dear Son. His blood was shed for many, for the remission of sins, which the cup of wine symbolized as given in that sacred feast to the disciples.

The verbal form of this wondrous institution we have as briefly noticed as the importance of the subject would allow. The object has not been in this to controvert the many erroneous practices, perversions, and doctrines, which have obtained footing among professing Christians in relation to this ordinance; but a simple and concise setting forth of what the primitive order and wording conveyed. These, faithfully and sincerely followed, will correct all abuses much more successfully than the greatest display of talented argument brought forward in refutation of errors which men who depart from the faith insidiously propagate.

SECTION VII. — THE TIME FOR OBSERVING THIS SACRED FEAST.

The time when Christ instituted the breaking of bread, as a sacred feast for future ages to observe till he come, was on "the same night in which he was betrayed" — the night when, for the last time, he went to celebrate the feast of the passover. In connection with that feast, the new ordinance was given and commanded for future observance. It is certain that it was designed to supersede the passover, and is spoken of as such. It is essential to the nature of laws, that the new ones should repeal the old whose place they are designed to take. The feast of the Lord's Supper was instituted to set forth, for the future, that which the paschal feast typified, as well as to commemorate an event in the history of the people. Upon this ground, Paul, in speaking of the Lord's Supper, says: "Christ our passover is slain for us; therefore, let us keep the feast."

From that time the breaking of bread was celebrated on the first day of the week, by the apostles and first disciples of Christ. It is true that

Christ has not enjoined any particular time for its observance: all that he has said is, "This do in remembrance of me;" and an inspired apostle has made it clear that this applies to both the bread and wine—that, as oft as they did it, it was to be in remembrance of Christ. But we suppose that the apostles understood this to be a part of Divine service under the Christian dispensation; for which reason, it may be, they uniformly observed it on the Lord's day.

We read that, when Paul came to Troas, he tarried there seven days. This evidently appears to be with a design, which is set forth—leaving, beyond all doubt, that it was to meet with the disciples when they assembled for worship. It is said, "And on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow." Here it is evident that the first day of the week was a day set apart for Christian worship, and that the principal object regarded was the Lord's Supper, but not to the exclusion of the other institutions of Christ. We are not told that they came together to read, pray, or praise—though these things doubtless were engaged in—but *to break bread.*

Paul, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, says: "When ye come together into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper; for in eating, every one taketh before others his own supper," &c. These remarks evidently were for the correction of abuses of a disgraceful character, in commemorating that sacred feast. But it may be said that no time is specified here when they did it, only that it was when they came together; but in the sixteenth chapter he tells us expressly that it was on the first day of the week that they did come together.

Turning from apostolic times to the days of Justin Martyr (he wrote about forty-four years after the death of the apostle John), he says: "On Sunday, all Christians in the city and country meet together, because it is the day of our Lord's resurrection, and then we hear read to us the writings of the prophets and apostles. This done, the president makes an oration to the assembly, to exhort them to imitate and do the things they hear; and then we all join in prayer; and after that we celebrate the Lord's Supper, and they that are willing and able give alms." We see, then, that it was the uniform practice of the first disciples in the Christian dispensa-

tion. The Holy Spirit doubtless caused these things to be written for our instruction, and this primitive practice restored would doubtless be for the spiritual advantage of the church of Christ.

It is said we have no command so to keep it. To which we may reply, we have no command to keep the first day of the week. The observances go together in the New Testament. The same arguments which might be used to overthrow the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, would also subvert the sanctification of the Lord's day. If we take the scripture example (for there is no express command to guide us), the two must be observed and sustained together or fall together; nothing justifies the weekly regard of one, and the laying aside of the other, but the fanciful whims of men.

But we revert again to the time of the institution, when ordained by Christ for another purpose. It had the same correspondence in relation to the Christian dispensation as that of the passover had to the Jewish. It was for commemoration after they were brought out of Egypt, though the passover was kept and instituted for their deliverance while bondmen.

There is the exact analogy in the institution of the Supper: the Jewish dispensation had not passed away on that memorable night—it was the eve of its dissolution. The blood was not then shed for the remission of sins, and in that sense they were not free. We can not now dwell upon this, but the position will be fully sustained in the next section.

Let it suffice that we ask, 'What could be the meaning of the words of the Saviour, when he said to the disciples, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom"?' Evidently there is an allusion to the new dispensation just about to be introduced, which will be fully proved when we come to consider it more largely. Then what is the meaning of such passages as the following: "Now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself"? The expression "end of the world" we know signifies *the end of the age* or *dispensation*. This, then, is the sense of the passage: '*In the end of the Jewish dispensation hath He appeared to abolish the sin-offering by the sacrifice of himself.*' He put an end to the Mo-

saic economy by the one offering of himself. The time, then, of the institution of the Supper, was undoubtedly at the closing of the Jewish dispensation, and the approaching of the Christian.

SECTION VIII. — THE ENDS ANSWERED IN EATING THE LORD'S SUPPER.

In the observance of this institution, certain definite objects are designed, of considerable moment; they are severally set forth by the Saviour himself, and by the apostle Paul. It was to be done by the disciples of Jesus, so far as concerned themselves, in memory of their dear Lord; so far as others may be regarded, it was to symbolize his death till he come. Thus it has respect in these two objects to the disciples of Jesus, and the world at large to which the gospel was now to be published.

As a memento to the disciples of the blessed Jesus, how imposing and affecting! It sets forth his mercy: he saw us in our sinful degradation under the oppressive nature of our servitude, and was moved to pity. Jesus had our grief at heart, for such we are to consider the

signification of *mercy*. In the true sufferings of our natural estate, God and Christ had pity toward us. The mercy of Christ was equal with the mercy of the Father and the Holy Spirit, when the plan was laid for salvation, in which the Lord, the mighty Saviour, engaged to become human, to deliver through death from the bondage of sin and death: —

"With pitying eyes the Prince of Peace beheld our helpless grief;
He saw, and oh! amazing love, he ran to our relief."

It is a memento of his love — such love as brought him into direct union and contact with suffering creatures. Love led him to take a human body, to redeem and save. The love of God shone conspicuously in the manner of his espousing the cause of his people while suffering in Egypt, and the judgments by which he avenged their wrongs upon their oppressors. The love of Jesus shines to all eternity, by espousing the cause of his people, and so coming into union with them as to be like one of a family, or the husband of a wife. It is said, "Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise took part of the same" (Hebrews 2: 14). The symbols of this flesh and blood are here. Mark his words:

"This is my body, which is broken for you"—"This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many."

It were love, indeed, such as history never yet chronicled, which could bring a prince from his throne, and from the splendor of his palace, surrounded by obedient and admiring attendants, to dwell with the meanest, suffering pauper of his dominion—a rebel, too, to mingle with his suffering state, and take his sorrows. But the Prince of heaven did this; and when love brought him from the highest, uncreated glory, to the lowest state of suffering creation, it is recorded himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses. It therefore was a memento of his love—"love which passeth knowledge," exclaimed the apostle Paul. Love made him the surety for his people, and it was the intense love of his heart which led him to say, "I lay down my life for the sheep," &c. Again: "Greater love hath no man that this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." And again: "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for

all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you."

It was a memento of his grace. He was full of grace. Grace resides in Jesus as waters in a fountain, and grace went forth from him as the spontaneous stream from the spring. He was grace itself; the lovely Jesus was fairer than the sons of men, and as Paul describes him (in Hebrews 1 : 3), he was "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." His very speech was savored with grace; truly did they say who listened to his discourse, "Never man spake like this man" (John 7 : 46). The freeness of his favor and love, as he communicated the intent of his heart, and displayed it in all his conduct, fixed itself upon the souls of his disciples, and they could not but love him supremely. He is indeed still to every real believer "the chiefest among ten thousand"—"the altogether lovely."

By this sacred feast the benefits secured and conferred are brought to remembrance. "Christ gave himself for us!" exclaim the worshipping souls, "and these elements are a memorial to us." The whole of his life and his death, with the merciful and gracious design therein of free-

dom from the bondage of sin and death; liberty to serve God in newness of life; the establishment of peace with God; the adoption of sons; the remission of sins, with justification, sanctification, and glory. What a remembrancer is this sacred feast! what blessed reflections, when we come by faith to break bread and drink of the cup! There our blessed Lord is seen, and it is good to be there.

But, secondly, there is the exhibition of a momentous truth before others. It sets forth His death till he come. The symbols of flesh and blood are here separate — the flesh set forth by the bread, the blood by the wine in the cup. Blood poured out and separated from the body is death. The emblems, then, show forth death. It is *the death of the Son of God* — not a mere man, but *God's only-begotten Son* — concerning whom he again and again bore testimony that he was well pleased. The death was a terrible death, as the elements proclaimed. There was bread broken to pieces; he was broken, as torn by nails, and scourges, and spears; they made long furrows in his back, they pierced his hands and his feet, and all his bones were out of joint. He was broken in spirit, and "a wounded spirit

who can bear?" He was broken in heart: it is asserted that he died literally of a broken heart. Oh, what anguish in his death, as he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

The wine showed forth that he died a terrible death, for it was produced by the bruising and compressing of the grape, which is of so many separate drops. The aggregate in the cup was made up of such drops; and Jesus, in agony, pressed in the winepress of the wrath of God and justice, "sweat as it were great drops of blood."

It commemorates the sacrifice of Christ for sinners. He was offered up, not for himself, but for the sins of his people. "He died, the just for the unjust, to bring sinners to God." His sacrificial death had this object in it, "the remission of sins." The paschal sacrifice set forth the release of the people from the hand of their oppressors. This sacrifice shows forth to men the only way by which they can be set free from the bondage of sin and death. The act of commemorating the death of Christ in the sacred rite of the Lord's Supper, is a declaration of the only way of salvation, and of the only ground of solid hope for the sinner, being in the

death of him who suffered, to bring us to God. Here is displayed the only method by which God will forgive the sins of the guilty, and show favor to such as deserve his wrath.

It displays the efficacy of His atonement. There were many things wrought by the hands of Moses, in judgment upon the Egyptians. But it was the passover that secured the release of the Israelites; it was that judgment upon the wicked, and that favor to God's people, which procured their freedom. It was once done, and done for ever. The commemoration annually was all that followed to set forth to succeeding ages what God had wrought for his people. Christ died but once. "He appeared in the end of the world," or dispensation, "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."—"For in that he died, he died unto sin *once;* but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God."—"For Christ also hath *once* suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." The repetition of sacrifices for sin under the law showed that sin was not put away, only ceremonially; but Christ having suffered *once*, to die no more, declares in the showing forth that sin is really atoned for.

The setting forth of His death in this institution is a silent but impressive way of preaching the gospel. It tells the convicted of a salvation provided, and an atonement made, and it woos the soul of the penitent to embrace, by faith, Jesus crucified for remission of sins, justification, salvation, and glory. This showing forth his death is like the lifting up of the brazen serpent in the wilderness, upon which the bitten and dying Israelites might look and live. Such were the objects designed to be set forth in the sacred supper of the Lord.

SECTION IX. — THE RIGHTFUL SUBJECTS TO ENGAGE IN IT.

We have now, in a few closing remarks, to take some brief notice of the rightful subjects to participate in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. As there is a correspondence between it and the passover-feast, so there might be expected a correspondence between the people who kept the one and the other, and so we find. The blood was to be upon the door-posts and the lintels of the houses of the Israelites. So the blood of Christ must be, by faith, upon the

consciences and hearts of such as commemorate his sacrificial death.

The institution of the Lord's Supper was for all his disciples who lived by faith upon him, thus discerning the ends of infinite mercy, love, and grace, in the institution. Where there could be such a discernment by faith of the sacrificial death of Christ, and reliance upon his atoning sacrifice for remission of sins, there were to be found the rightful subjects to commemorate his death. The symbols are spread out, and Jesus says, 'Eat, O friends—drink, O beloved!'

The Scriptures demand no other qualification, in coming to the Lord's Supper, but faith in the mysteries symbolized by the elements. He who discerneth not the Lord's body and blood is the unworthy communicant, and eateth and drinketh condemnation unto himself. But he whose faith apprehends the blessed doctrines of salvation by Christ crucified, and is feeding by that faith upon these mysterious glories, is a worthy communicant. Christ enjoined no other qualification, the apostles demanded no other, and we have no right to institute any other. There are other things desirable to observe, but none other essential, or enjoined in the word of God,

but faith. But we shall have occasion to dwell more fully on this when treating of those duties which it is desirable for every Christian to observe in coming to the Lord's table.

When our blessed Lord had gone over these solemnities of the sacred feast which established it a Christian ordinance, he with his disciples sang a hymn of praise for the goodness and mercy of God, and left the sacred spot for scenes which filled their hearts with sorrow and amazing agonies, and which brought the Saviour to that death he had just symbolized out in the feast. The hymn spoken of was probably the recitative chant used by the Jews at the feast, which was Psalms 113–118.

Who could find in his heart, if rightly influenced by the Holy Spirit, a disposition to thrust away any sincere soul from commemorating the dying love of his Lord and Saviour, and from having fellowship with Christ in his sufferings? The greatest violence must be done to every sensibility of the renewed soul and sanctified heart to do it. There must be the hardening of the heart, toward not only the disciples of Jesus, but toward him also, to shut out any devoted follower from participation in this sacred feast.

PART IV.

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

SECTION I. — PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

In the foregoing chapters, it appears that many errors and misconceived opinions have gained ground extensively with the professing Christian church in relation to the two symbolical ordinances which are given to us by Christ himself. That the errors are not all on one side or with one section of the Christian church in the world, but, upon close investigation, with every section, more or less in some particulars, is evident; all of which have arisen from false constructions put upon the letter of the ordinances, or a combination of the two in a manner never designed, and which, when fairly examined, they do not admit.

But while these things must have become undeniable to every serious, honest, reflecting mind, they have been brought out and exhibited, not so much by any argument—for this has been studiously avoided—but by the simple exhibition of the institutions, with their bearings, as set forth in the Scriptures. These means must be eventually successful, for sooner or later every error must fall before truth, and truth alone shall stand.

But it is in the present and following lectures that the fallacy of restricted communion, which some baptists so strenuously advocate, will be brought out and exposed. The strength of their position lies upon the consideration that the commission, which embraces the institution of baptism, and the practice of the apostles, is everything needed to give authority for the course they adopt. They say: 'We are first to preach; then baptize the believer into the faith of the gospel, in the name of the Trinity, by immersing in water; then receive him into the church—and, as the Lord's Supper is a church ordinance, so to the table of the Lord. This is the only way we know of, and the only thing we practise.'

This may appear to be authority to many, and so simple and truthful as not to allow of a doubt as to the correctness of the position taken. But it assumes no more weight in defence of restricted communion than a small particle of dust does upon the scale of the balance. Supposing the verbal statement to be sustained as to the practice laid down in the New Testament, has it anything to do with the spirit and design of the institution? If that be misunderstood and lost sight of, of what force is a verbal arrangement? And suppose the notion of a church now is perfectly contrary to the notion of a church as Christ and his apostles regarded it, and suppose that in the scriptural view of a church, it appears that disciples were of the church of Christ before they were baptized, and that the much-talk of their being "added to the church after baptism" was only that welcome with which visible followers of Christ will receive others when their conversion becomes manifest—*then* what becomes of the authority assumed, and where is the truthfulness of this kind of stereotyped order about which there is apparently such triumphant boasting?

If the arguments put forth by restricted-com-

munion baptists in defence of their practice be correct, and according to the spirit of Christ, then they are in no way reconcilable with the wording and spirit of his institutions, for in them he has nowhere even implied a dependence one upon the other; they have distinct bearings, and must necessarily be viewed separate, in order that they may be suitably observed. Yet, while Christ has never bound them together, men have ventured to make them fast by a sort of vital cord or ligament. If restricted-communion baptists have Christ's authority for excluding any disciple of his from communing at his table, then they have authority to make men disobey a positive institution of his—a standing ordinance for the Christian's observance to the end of time; while the wording of the institution never so much as makes allusion to any preliminary qualification but faith in Christ as the Saviour. Their position, substantiated, can be nothing less than Jesus Christ *versus* Jesus Christ, and a kingdom divided against itself. Now this can not be. Christ can not command an institution to be observed, and yet give authority to some to make those to whom the command applies nullify it against their consent:

well, then, it must be evident that officious men have mistaken their commission, and thereby attempted to make the word of God of none effect.

We have now to turn to the consideration of a Christian church, that will bring out more fully the basis of all Christian obligations, and the relative nature of all the ordinances of Christ. It is upon the scriptural nature of a church, and not upon any artificial combination of society suggested by man, that the views we entertain of church ordinances must stand or fall; so, also, the rightful subjects to participate in such ordinances must be those, and only those, pointed out by the Lord himself.

SECTION II. — THE ETYMOLOGY OF THE WORD "CHURCH."

It is necessary to take into consideration, at the outset of our inquiry, the etymology of the term *church;* also the proper signification of the original of that word. These are essential in leading us to the proper conclusion of what the Scriptures set forth, when we find the word *church* used in relation to a Christian society, as much as the signification of the word *baptize*

is determined by an appeal to the original Greek word *baptizo*.

CHURCH or KIRK is precisely the same word in a varied orthography. *Kirk* is still retained by the Scotch; but *church* is, by corruption, from the Saxon *kirik*, changing the hard *c* in *ch*. These words *kirik* and *kirk* are from the Greek words *kuriou oikos*, which is "house of the Lord," and which refers to some of the primitive assemblies in houses, such as that in Philemon's, of which Paul thus writes: "The church in thy house." These Greek words became contracted into *kurioik* and *kuriake*, from which we have the Saxon *kirik*, or *church*, and the Scotch *kirk*. The above has relation, then, to assemblies for worship in houses, which were not unfrequent in primitive times, especially where there were but few Christians in a town or district.

In another sense the word *church* has been used, from the most remote period, to represent the Greek term *ekklesia*, which often occurs in the New Testament, which was adopted into the Latin language without any change, and which gives us our words *ecclesiastics* and *ecclesiastical*, corresponding with the Saxon terms

churchmen and *of churchmen.* The meaning of the word, among classical Greek writers, is *meeting*, or *assembly;* and in this, or the somewhat modified sense of *community*, it was adopted by the writers of the New Testament. *Meeting* or *assembly* may apply to any congregation of people, good or bad; therefore the nature of it is to be understood from connecting circumstances. Some have derived it immediately from the Hebrew word KEL, *an assembly*, which in the Old Testament is most commonly translated *congregation*, but sometimes *multitude*, *company*, &c.; so that the word *kel* came to be a kind of appellative by which the Israelites were designated, and distinguished from Moses and Aaron their leaders, and are therefore frequently denominated "the congregation of Israel," "the congregation of the Lord," and this is the most extensive application of the word.

The word *ekklesia*, which for the most part we translate *church* throughout the New Testament, seems to be derived from *ekkaleo*, to *call out of*, or *from;* and is commonly applied to an assembly of citizens, or a company gathered out of a multitude by a civil magistrate or some of the existing authorities, which would be called

a lawful assembly; but if otherwise convened, for riotous purposes, it would bear the designation of an unlawful assembly. Such was the mob, or confused assembly, which we read of in Acts 19—which, through the excitement created by one Demetrius, a silverworker, at Ephesus, against Paul, a tumultuous assembly was raised, which having been appeased by the judicious interference of the town-clerk, the assembly was quietly dispersed from the theatre where they had been convened, with the advice that, if any just complaint could be made against Paul and his companions, it should be determined in *ennomo ekklesia*, a lawful assembly.

The word *ekklesia*, then, requires some other word or words conjoined, to convey any idea of the nature of the assembly. In its appropriated application to a religious use, it is "the church of God"—the congregation collected by God, and devoted to his service. The church of Christ comprises the whole company of Christians, wheresoever found; because by the preaching of the gospel they are called out of the spirit and maxims of the world: and refers likewise to all small assemblies convened in the name of Jesus Christ, to worship and serve him.

SECTION III. — USE OF THE TERM "CHURCH" IN THE SCRIPTURES.

HERE let us investigate the use of the term *church* in the sacred Scriptures, as describing religious congregations. It is necessary to state that it is now very seldom regarded as originally applied; and this is one principal reason why many who are sincere, but who have not devoted their attention to the use of ecclesiastical phrases, have often sustained certain opinions which they have conceived to be correct, from the false construction put upon the terms used by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures, or by wresting words from their originul meaning, to make them bear some other meaning.

Christianity became corrupt by designing men, more or less led by the evil spirit, from its earliest establishment. The Christian dispensation was no sooner introduced among men, than Satan made some successful attempts to mar it, as he did the beautiful creation of God at the first in man's transgression. Whenever ambitious or designing men have wished to establish their dogmas, they have done so by falsi-

fying the meaning of scripture language: they have corrupted the word of God so as to make it of none effect. Nearly all error is traceable to this.

Power and authority have been exercised in the church by misconstruction of the Scriptures. Then, under this assumed bearing of the word of God, men have boldly asserted such power and authority to be from God, and that which has followed upon it has been written in blood. The assumption of power, as expressly delegated by God to men from the Scriptures, has led them to coerce to uniformity in all things; whatever their corrupt minds have invented, they have either sought to maintain these notions as the word of God, or deducible therefrom. Assuming the power to constrain to submission, even when conscience has declared against the subscription to their proposed terms, or doctrines, they have dealt out vengeance to the full upon the declared contumacious.

Thousands of the conscientious children of God and of the true spiritual church have endured the most cruel punishments that Satan could invent, and even suffered the most tormenting deaths by the command of the so-called

high authorities over the church of Christ. But these prominent monsters, who have trampled on and destroyed God's beautiful heritage, are not the only individuals to be noticed.

It is an ingredient of fallen humanity to desire to rule and coerce; and according to the facilities for exercising power, and the want of gracious influence to restrain from seeking one's own ways and doing one's own works, so it has ever been made manifest in religious matters. Errors in doctrine and practice have been enforced, and persecution in some shape or other has been the penalty of non-compliance, from his exalted holiness, the so-called vicar and apostle of Jesus Christ, the pope, down to the modest, unassuming baptist, who in all meekness and lowliness of mind esteems others better than himself. He, too, professes to take Christ for his example, and piously declares that he has delegated authority to open and to shut up the door to the feast of the kingdom of heaven to whomsoever he pleases: and here is the true secret of restricted communion.

The use, or rather the abuse, of the term *church*, has not been among the least of the errors which has brought schisms, heresies, and a

long list of evils in their train, such as debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults; it has been foremost in them all, the vanguard of a terrible army. The unscriptural uses of the term *church* at the present time are many. For example, every denomination bearing the Christian name assumes the title of *church;* so that there are constant rival (so-called) churches, each aiming at ascendency, in some cases aided by political governments, and in others striving together for mastery. And who does not see that all the evils enumerated above, and many more, have sprung out of the misapplication of the term *church* to the multiplied denominations of Christians?

Then there are minor divisions of these several heads of various shades holding a diversity of doctrine. Under these distinctions, numbers are grouped, hoisting alike their banner of strife. Take, for instance, the baptist denomination, in respect to one association of that body, viz., the "Hudson River Association." A respectable pastor of that body silenced the scruples of an individual, whose views of doctrine did not comport with the articles of faith subscribed to by

that association, by saying that the churches in that body varied so much, one from the other, in doctrinal views, that every shade might be found there, from churches holding hyper-Calvinism to the lowest doctrines of Arminianism: all these are organized bodies under the distinctive name of *baptist churches.* But is there any authority for the use of the term "church" for any, from the papal dominion down to the smallest baptist conventicle, where a few are enrolled as members of a church, bound by laws partly Divine and partly human, covenanted together as organized churches? We say, "To the word and the testimony;" and we shall soon find how the word has been perverted to a sense in which the Holy Ghost never used it.

The term *church*, under whatever circumstance used in scripture, has no application to those combinations of Christians as existing in the present day. They had their bishops and deacons, but they were not organized bodies, covenanted together in what is called "church relationship," with names entered in church-registers, and consisting only of such individuals thus bound together, who had put themselves under certain regulations of human invention.

Call them combinations of Christians, if you please; regard them as religious societies, compacted by man, and not by God; look upon them as worthy Christians *where their conduct justifies it*—they have engaged together to worship God, as in the general holding the same views, and are combined to sustain and help forward certain religious institutions for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ among men: but, if we designate them *churches*, we miscall them; we circumscribe our ideas of the term *church* by doing so; and we make the church the society of man, whereas, God the Holy Spirit declares it to be *the congregation of God* or *of Christ.*

Here is an error fruitful to an incalculable degree, bearing a multitudinous progeny, destructive of all that is good. What we call "churches" are in truth nothing but combinations of professedly religious bodies; and, until we see this, we shall never be right in our ideas of churches, or the duties of churches.

SECT. IV. — THE BODIES DISTINGUISHED UNDER THE TITLE "CHURCH" IN THE SCRIPTURES.

Look at the churches, or some of them, which shall serve to describe the whole, in the sense in which scripture has pointed them out.

In its most extended latitude, the term *church* embraces the whole family of God (called out from the world and the spirit of the world by the Holy Spirit, visible or invisible to us, from the days of Adam onward to the end of time), who are redeemed unto God by the blood of his Son — comprehended under the idea of a numerous family, of which Christ is the head, as it is recorded, "He is the head of the body, *the church*" (Colossians 1 : 18). It is said : "Christ loved *the church*, and gave himself for *it;* that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5 : 25–27). So, in Hebrews (12 : 23), it is said: "Ye are come to the general assembly and *church* of the first-born, which are written in

heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." These passages embrace the universal church; they treat of the whole redeemed family unto God by the blood of Jesus.

It is used in reference to the Jewish church, the whole professing community and nation as a people called out and brought out of Egypt, to go into Canaan. That nation, as distinguished from other nations, as the people of God, and a nation who worshipped and served the only living and true God, were so designated; and for this reason, it may be, that the Hebrew word *kel* came to be a kind of appellative by which the Israelites were designated, and frequently denominated the "*congregation* of Israel," the "*congregation* of the Lord," the "*church* in the wilderness," &c.

What we generally denominate the Jewish church, or the church of God under the Jewish dispensation, is designated a house over which Moses was appointed as servant, as explained by Paul: "Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after" (Hebrews 3 : 5). Moses was not the builder or maker of the *church*

(or, as it is in the above quotation, *house)*, but a faithful servant, observing everything enjoined, for all was typical of the Christian church, as well as, that in their own existence they were the church of God — the called-out to be his peculiar people, and to show forth his praise among men.

The term *church*, as applied to the Israelites, is to be regarded in a twofold point of view. The whole nation, as an outwardly professing people in religious observances, were called *the church;* but the true church, as spiritually called out from the world, were within this external: there was a church within a church — all were not Israel which were of Israel; neither, in the true sense of the spiritual church, were all embraced who were the descendants of Judah, for "he is not a Jew that is one outwardly."

It is used in reference to the whole community of professing Christians, but not acknowledged so by the Lord. He has truly marked out the distinction between a nominal church and a spiritual church. The church of Christ, under the Christian dispensation, is no national church, but universal as applied to all who are

disciples of Christ, and who savingly do believe in him. Extensive as may be any Christian society bearing a denominational name, it can not properly bear the title of *catholic church;* it is only part, at best, of the universal church, and there is great absurdity on the part of the papal church in assuming the term *catholic.* The universal church is specially referred to by Jesus, when he said to Peter, in alluding to his acknowledgment of the Messiah, and confession of the doctrine of Christ—"Upon this rock will I build my church." Upon such an acknowledged faith as this, the universal Christian church under the Christian dispensation shall be raised, bidding defiance to the powers and counsels of hell. But the papists say, 'No, it is Peter upon whom the church is built.' We demur, and they burn us as heretics. The restricted-communion baptists say, 'It is water—*water* makes the visible church.' We demur, and they excommunicate us. There is the burning of palpable fire, and the burning of excision—the one, to be sure, more dreadful upon the body than the other, but the spirit in both alike consuming.

Church applies to all living Christians in any

one period of time—the called, and separate, and chosen, who are living to God and to Christ, evincing that they are not of the world, but chosen out of the world. The church in her militant aspect, girded with the armor of the Lord, fighting the fight of faith, walking in the ordinances of the Lord blameless: to such we have already made allusion where it is said, "The *Lord added to the church* daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2: 47). Paul, relating his persecution against the church in his unconverted state, when writing to the Philippians, says, . . . "concerning zeal, persecuting the church." And to the Corinthians he writes, "I am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." These statements applied universally to the Christian church, and are thus emphatically expressed in giving an account of his conversion, in Acts 22: 4. He says of his conduct on to the time Christ arrested him—"I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women"—signifying that his persecutions were directed against all indiscriminately who called upon the name of Jesus, wherever he found them.

The word has also numerous applications to limited congregations, and to every one such meeting in any given place; and it is either expressed or implied, in speaking of such churches, that they are distinguished by locality or name, so as to be known as one assembly convened to worship God. A *few*, convened in a *house*, were as much *a church* in that house, as the large assembly in a commodious place were *a church*, or as that the universal multitude were *the church*. The few were, if we may so speak, in miniature what the others were upon the more extended scale. When speaking of a district or country where several such churches were, they were referred to in the plural, as "the churches of Asia." Having briefly referred to the uses which the Holy Spirit has made of the term *church* in the sacred Scriptures, we pass to another feature of the subject.

SECTION V. — THE CHARACTER OF THE ASSEMBLIES.

It is of the first importance to regard the character of the assemblies pointed out as the *church* or *churches* of Christ in the Scriptures; so that, in forming a contrast between them and the so-

called modern churches, some idea may be given of the unfounded nature of the systems, which many believe to be the exact likeness of that which existed in the apostles' days.

Faith in Christ, and nothing but faith in Christ, constituted those who believed the members of the universal church, according to the sacred Scriptures. The term *church* was used to denote the whole body of Christians, and all the disciples of Christ, without regard to questions about the instructions of Christ and his apostles which divided the opinions of Christians even in the earliest times.

But we are told that there is gospel order, by which the church of Christ in the world has a visible existence, or by which individuals become connected with the church, whether regarded as the universal or a smaller assembly. It is at this point that men diverge from the truth; and, by this once departing from the simple and plain statement of a church given by the Holy Ghost, the errors that are now so prevalent have arisen. Mark well, then, that *the church* is neither more nor less than *the called out:* they believe in Christ, they hold to the head, and are the household of God. They

are the true church whenever they are assembled for religious purposes. They become members of the church as soon as they believe in Jesus Christ with the heart; and no other qualification do the Scriptures require for a visible member of the church; then it is that all Christian duties are laid before every individual member of the church, symbolical ordinances and all other ordinances, and everything which the Lord has enjoined upon his disciples, but not one of them necessary to make visible membership of the church: if anything else be regarded necessary, the term *church*, as used by the Holy Spirit, is destroyed.

Nothing can be more simple than the ideas of the church of Christ, if men will let it be what God the Spirit declares it. It is the coming together of believers in one place. Methinks we hear some say, '*Baptized believers.*' We could certainly wish all believers to be baptized, but not more do we wish them to observe that rite than every other which Christ has enjoined. But it may be said, 'This is the first duty the Lord has enjoined to be observed.' We say so too, and desire it to be attended to the first. But again, it may be said, 'It is the

way into the church.' Then, if so, we say, with all reverence: 'All that God the Spirit has said about the church you must make to be false; for he has said the church is an assembly of the called out: Christ is the door, and faith in him the actual entering in. Baptism is one of the ordinances of Christ for his *called out.* As a symbolical ordinance, it is in one particular to set forth regeneration by the Holy Spirit, whereby we come to believe savingly in Christ.'

Men, to establish their own dogmas, often make gross mistakes. It is not because in several instances converts, almost simultaneously with conviction, were baptized, and described almost in one breath to have been added to the disciples, that baptism had aught to do with their being of the church. This notion would not have been entertained, if men, to support their systems, did not catch at bare words, like drowning men at straws; for, had they followed up the reading, they would have soon come to a statement which would have convinced them that baptism had nothing to do with their being added to the disciples; for it is written, "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." If he did it by the calling them out

from the world by his Spirit, it certainly was not done by baptism. We could go into every particular, and prove beyond doubt that there is not an inch of ground which these reasoners against revealed truth can find to stand on; but we must leave the remarks made to find their way to the understanding of sober, pious, reflecting people, and they will read for themselves, and see the fallacy of human systems, when compared with the word of God.

Consider the churches of the present day, in the light in which the Holy Spirit presents the Christian church, and there is about as much likeness between the one and the other as there is between a gracious soul and a worldly man. As soon as souls were converted to God, they were of the church, and went to their own company; if they had heretofore been desperate characters, and no knowledge had come to the church of any change, then they of the church would desire to be satisfied that this profession was not a design to be played off for wicked purposes: but as soon as they could know that the work was of God, such new converts were allowed to enter in as of the church. It was so in the case of Saul.

The additions to the church were made by the Lord's separating grace, when individuals went voluntarily and gave themselves up to the worshipping company. But in the now-denominated churches, the company take upon themselves to say who among those that believe shall be of the church. They admit by their sufferance, or reject at their discretion; and it may be the most godly disciples they spurn away, because they can not subscribe to some of their cherished heretical dogmas. They have their rules and laws of uniformity. The one question may not be thought of—'Have you received Christ into your heart by faith?'—but, 'Do you believe this, that, and the other?'—a non-essential, perhaps, a lie against God's truth it may be, or a matter of doubtful disputation. Then, 'Do you subscribe to our rules, and will you adopt our church covenant, and abide by it?' After all this cross-examination, if they like you, they take you in among their number by their sufferance; and if not, they reject you—no matter to them what the Lord has done for you, by calling you out and giving you a name among his children.

The true church of Christ gives the most per-

fect liberty for the full and entire exercise of private judgment in every matter. The doctrine of Christ must be believed, to make it manifest that God has called out: further than this perhaps no two individuals may see eye to eye in all things. We are not to be gagged, or padlocked, or disciplined for the exercise of private judgment, nor for speaking our own thoughts in love one to another, as the restricted baptists would discipline; for it is mainly by the free interchange of thoughts, views, and feelings, under the blessing of God, that we grow up into Christ in all things. Why do we see the church withered and blasted, as it is in the present day, its numerical force maintained by artificial means, and for the most part with dead professors? The answer is, 'Men's systems have overspread the church, and these societies have despised the operations of the Spirit, and trodden down the heritage of the Lord.'

SECTION VI. — THE HISTORICAL FEATURES OF THE INNOVATION UPON CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

It is full of instruction and warning to mark in the historical features the gradual manner in

which the church has become so changed from the simple and glorious appearance in which she is presented by the Holy Spirit in the New Testament.

It was soon regarded as essential to the idea of a church, that believers should be bound together by a sort of mutual pledge, and form a compact and united body. How true it is that the wisdom of man is foolishness with God! If the love of Christ were not the bond to unite the body in close compact, how could it be expected that any human pledge should? Certain outward forms of profession came to be regarded as requisite for every member — such as baptism and the partaking of the Lord's Supper, as introductory to the church (observe, baptism was not the only ordinance to be observed as a prerequisite to the church, but the Lord's Supper also, when men began to make terms of church-fellowship); then certain officers, as bishops, pastors, and deacons, were regarded as essential, instead of appendages; also certain uniform services, and the acknowledgment of certain propositions as containing a just exposition and summary of the doctrine of Christ and the apostles.

Efforts were thus made from a very early period in the history of Christianity, and continued to bring the body of professing Christians into this state of consistency and uniformity. It progressed in this direction, and ultimately the bishop of Rome, who was represented as the direct successor of Peter (the rock, as they say, on whom the church was to be built), received by almost universal consent a kind of headship or supremacy. About him was gathered a council, consisting of other bishops, pastors, deacons, &c., forming a supreme authority in this compact community, and a court of ultimate appeal. These things grew darker and darker for the church until the period of the Reformation.

At the Reformation, certain states of Europe separated themselves from the papal usurpation. The separation was made on various grounds, which the history of the Reformation fully explains. The movement was not made, at the first, with the idea of separation, but for correction of abuses. But the resistance which was made to the efforts of the reformers, combined with other things, rendered this impracticable; and nothing remained for the states in which the call for reformation was the loudest,

but to break off from the great confederacy, and to renounce entirely all connection with popery and the so-called papal church. Then arose other ecclesiastical bodies, assuming the name of *church*, as the *church of Geneva*, the *church of Scotland*, the *church of England*, &c., meaning the Christian members of those political confederacies, or belonging to those nations, when regarded under the aspect of being professed believers in Christ.

The protestant churches (for so they have been denominated, of whatever country or order differing from the papal church), as national churches, when the bodies of such nations broke off their allegiance to the pope, became a sort of national independency. Each protestant nation had its own church, and regulated its own affairs according to the principles upon which it was established, without communication with other protestant people.

These, as national establishments, were not universally approved. Many of the people of each nation dissented from the principle of such national establishments, and accordingly adopted such regulations as they regarded scriptural. They formed themselves into little bands of

Christians, though in some countries they met with much opposition and persecution by their declaration of nonconformity to national institutions. These little groups, holding to the head, even Christ, by faith, as they assembled in rooms or whatever places they could for Divine worship, without organization by man or human laws, were more in conformity to the primitive model of the New-Testament churches than any that had been known in the world since the early departure from the simplicity of Christ's churches by the adoption of outward forms of profession, and uniformity of practice and faith as declared by man.

But it was not long that these little, oppressed companies of Christians were contented to be such imitators of the glorious and simple models of the churches of the Holy Spirit, in the New Testament. They began to organize under their several banners and denominational characters; and in proportion as toleration was exercised, and it was regarded as common right for men to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences, so in proportion the original simplicity of these nonconformist bodies passed away, and every one more or less has

fallen into the error which they so deprecated. They have certain creeds and rules of government, to which every one of the body must subscribe, thus going into the same path of error which led to that dreadful state of things when popery was rampant, with all its evil consequences; and uniformity by submission to all that was required was finally demanded at the peril of persecution unto death, wherever Conscience lifted her voice to protest against any unscriptural heresy or oppressive enactment.

In countries such as the United States, where there is no national religious establishment, no state church supported and defended by legal enactments — all religious denominations being alike countenanced and protected by law — we see the various denominations struggling together as rivals. The interests of this denomination and that denomination are common household terms in matters pertaining to ecclesiastical bodies; and what is this but a dreadful feature of antichrist? Is Christ divided? Can the interests of one denomination be spoken of in opposition to another, without in spirit being schismatics, dividing the church, which is but one, every member being equally precious to

Jesus, ransomed by his blood, and called out by his Spirit, and as essential to the unity of the body of Christ as an arm or a finger to the perfection of the human frame?

SECT. VII. — DENOMINATIONAL EQUALITY NO SAFEGUARD AGAINST CORRUPTION AND OPPRESSION.

The equal footing upon which all denominations of Christian bodies are placed in the United States is in itself a glorious feature of liberty; but with regard to the denominations, at least to one of them we may speak, this liberty is wofully abused. There are stringent enactments in the ecclesiastical polity of the restricted-baptist denomination, which destroy the right of private judgment which God gives to every man to enjoy, and is both cruel and persecuting to a large portion of its members.

Christianity has lost her simple and beautiful dress, to be decorated with the uncomely ornaments of man's making. Religious societies, established upon a compact system of subscribing and submitting to certain rules and dogmas of man's compiling, and making such the terms of membership, are called "Christian

churches"—when in these, in many instances, godly as the life and character may be, the right of private judgment in civil relations, and religious rites and observances, is denied if it differ from the measures of conformity laid down; and if determined to exercise it unceremoniously, the character is cried down at large, the individual must be shunned as a pestilence, and excommunicated, to drift in a dismembered condition upon the wide world.

If the people were only to awake up to this ecclesiastical oppression, so as to be fully alive to this assumed authority over their consciences and their rights of private judgment, they would possess the true moral courage of Christ's freemen, of which now so many seem comparatively destitute; they would laugh such discipline and disciplinarians to scorn, and would soon recover something of the primitive simplicity and freedom of Christian churches; while their oppressors would, from shame, seek the dark corners of the earth in which to hide themselves.

In this outline review of what now exists in relation to the Christian church, it is manifest that there is something radically wrong in the nature and constitution of Christian societies,

called *churches*. We here quote from Tassey's work upon "The Supreme and Exclusive Authority of the Lord Jesus Christ in Religious Matters." Referring to the misapplication of the term *church*, and its abuse by religious societies, at page 89 he says: "Nothing can be clearer than this, that the system, whatever it may be, that obliges its adherents to use either the language or phraseology of scripture in a sense in which neither was ever used by the Holy Spirit; or to apply an appropriated appellation to something that is essentially different from that to which it is applied by the Oracles of Truth, betrays a bad cause, and shows that it rests upon a sandy foundation. On the other hand, that plan which obliges its defenders to use the words and phrases of scripture in exact correspondence with the import of them, as applied by the Holy Spirit, will be found, upon close investigation, to come nearest to the pattern which God has exhibited for our imitation."

To the above quotation we would add another from the same work (page 87), bearing upon the simplicity and sufficiency of the Scriptures pertaining to the things concerning the church: "Let it not be supposed that his [the Saviour's]

instructions are dark and mysterious, and beyond the reach of vulgar minds: if so, the gospel was never intended for the poor, and ceases to be glad tidings to the needy and destitute. Nor let it be imagined that regarding both the individual and social conduct of his children, that ample directions are not furnished them. If this were true, then the Scriptures are an indifferent rule, and Christ is not an all-wise lawgiver. Then his wisdom, his foresight, and his prudence, which ought to have embraced every case and provided against every exigency, all, all tumble to the ground; and instead of having infallible principles to guide the conscience, we must become the dupes of every designing lordling, the obedient and willing slaves of fallible and erring mortals. Nay, more, we must resign our liberties into the safe-keeping of a certain privileged order of men, and no longer dare to assert the rights of conscience, or refuse obedience to the sweeping mandates of self-constituted authorities. But enough of this. The human mind is free, naturally free from every ecclesiastical yoke. It is only for it to assert and maintain its rights, and not resign its liberties into the hands of others. The Christian is

the Lord's freeman. 'To stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made his people free,' he feels to be his duty and privilege. 'He is to call no man master upon earth, for one is his master, even Christ.'" Then a paragraph from Miller's "Letters" (vol. 2, pages 72, 73) follows: "'His word is the *sole standard* by which, as Christians, or as churches, we must stand or fall. Happy will it be for us if we can appeal to the great Searcher of hearts, that we have not followed *the traditions and inventions of men*, but the sure word of prophecy, which is given to us to be a light to our feet and a lamp to our path, to guide us into the way of peace.'"

SECTION VIII.—THE VISIBILITY OF CHURCHES AND MEMBERS.

We must not pass over here the visibility of the church and the visibility of individual membership. *Church* is not a term for an idea, or sensibility, or even a spirit, but for a material substance—an assembly of rational, active beings, demonstrated to be such by seeing, hearing, feeling, judging, &c. The grand question is, 'What constitutes the visibility of the church

as it exists in this world?' The question is grave, but nothing is more simple than the answer it demands.

An assembly of believers in Christ constitutes the visibility of the church. Their acts of religious worship may more fully demonstrate the fact to the unacquainted spectator of the assembly, but the assembly itself constitutes its visibility. We have heard much talk about the visible character which the church must assume, and the requisitions to constitute the church visible. All this is mere verbal nonsense.

When the Israelites were brought from the house of bondage into the wilderness, did it want anything more to demonstrate their existence than that they were a congregation of people there? and did it want anything more to prove that, for forty years, they were there as the Lord's church in the wilderness, than that as a religious assembly they were wandering about for that space of time? The term *church*, or *ekklesia*, signifies as much a called-out assembly, as the word *baptize* or *baptizo* does "putting under water." The baptists never ask, 'What is the visibility of the ordinance of baptism?'—there would be no sense in doing so;

neither is there in asking for the visibility of the church.

But it may be that the inquiry is more in relation to the character of the assembly than to the assembly itself. 'How is it visibly distinguished as a Christian church from a worldly congregation, or a congregation of Jewish worshippers?' By the profession of faith in Christ Jesus as their Saviour—by the ready answer they would give to every interrogater who would say, 'What assembly is this?'—'An assembly of Christians;" for doubtless they should "be ready always to give a reason of the hope that is in them with meekness and fear."

If you go into an assembly convened for political purposes, though you may have been before a stranger to the object of the assembly, yet you will not have listened long to the speakers before you will rightly decide that it is a political meeting, and to which side of political wranglers they belong. So, if you go into a congregation convened as a temperance society, you can in the same way soon decide the nature of the meeting from the addresses of those who hold forth. In either of these examples, the object of the assembly, and the views they ad-

vocate, are known without reference to rules and laws of combination. These assemblies need no such compact, nor have they subscribed to uniformity of sentiment. They regard *one object; this* brought them together, *this* gave the distinctive features to the assembly, and made it a visible political meeting, or a visible temperance-meeting. Such, too, is the very constitution of a New-Testament church. It is not visible by human laws, or covenant agreement, or by endorsing articles of faith, but by union to Christ, as is the temperance-congregation by union to temperance, and the political assembly by union to a certain political head. But alas! multitudes want something more to make a Christian church than that which the Holy Ghost has declared to be a Christian church.

'But what constitutes a visible Christian?' it may be asked — 'seeing that of such individuals brought together there is the visible body or church?' The answer is here also simple — nothing more so: 'It is a profession of faith in the doctrine of Christ, and obedience to the precepts of the gospel, and that not so much the ceremonial as the moral; these are the outward things, and by these only the world can judge.'

But the true Christian seeks to press further—wishing to discover, in every visible member of the church, the heart-experience of the truth, the teaching and comforting of the Holy Spirit; to discern, by the relation of what the Lord has done for the soul, that there has been the conviction of sin by the Spirit; a godly sorrow felt, and faith in the blood of Christ as an atonement for sin experienced, with other evidences of a gracious state, soon discoverable where the Lord has regenerated the soul by his Spirit. But the experience, as satisfactory evidence to other real Christians, is one thing; the visibility of Christian discipleship is another.

It may be asked, 'Is this profession of faith in Christ enough to make a visible member of the visible church?' It is all that Christ has enjoined, all that the Holy Spirit asks, and all that the apostles demanded. Men, who have formed ecclesiastical societies, have demanded confessions, subscriptions, and promises, to all that they in their severally-confederated clubs, societies, or churches, as they are by common consent called, have seen fit to enjoin; but there is a satisfaction in knowing that no unwillingness to bow to their dogmas, no desire on their

part to keep from their societies or excommunicate, can thereby ever hinder any from being of the visible church. They may persecute, and bring their regulations to bear in severing from their societies, but no such act truly affects the Christian in the sight of the Lord: human laws can never have influence over his church. Their excommunications as such societies, and on such grounds as alleged, are mere farcical acts, which may serve to terrify children, but which men may laugh at. Such excommunications are nothing more than an assumed serious threat to sever the head from the body: the effigy is produced, then the executioner and the block, and off comes the head of the effigy in the place of the head which was threatened to be taken away! It is a religious and sacred mockery, the practice of foolish, erring men; but, alas! it is trifling with sacred things.

But, returning to the question—it may be asked, 'Is not baptism such a profession as the apostles demanded to constitute visible discipleship?' Designing men, filled more with party names and party dogmas, have told you so, and multitudes unsuspectingly have reposed confidence in the truthfulness of the answer. But

exercise your own judgments; ask yourselves what are the evidences these partisans have given you: what further can they say than that the apostles did baptize believers, according to the commission Jesus gave them? You will then see that this has nothing to do with the question, and will at once say that they baptized because Christ commanded it; but if they did not say it was to make visible disciples, what right has any one to say so, any more than the papist has to say that it makes them children of God, regenerates them, and so on? Here you will come to the honest conclusion that, if no better evidence can be found, it is no evidence at all, and you will consequently reject it from your creed for ever.

The apostles did not require baptism to constitute visible disciples of Christ, for many reasons: two may here be given. The first is, it would have been assuming what Christ never authorized them to assume; he "added to the church," and not they by any ordinance which they were to administer; faith and not water constituted discipleship, therefore the apostles did not require it, for Christ himself did not; and if on no other ground than that he did not

require it of them, it were enough to evidence that they had no authority in requiring it of others for that purpose. The second reason is, it would fail of the design. They could have been baptized in a minute, and no one have been present to have witnessed the ceremony, as in the case of the eunuch. What visibility did it give to his Christianity? The baptism of yesterday, in the presence of multitudes, does not make a visible member of the body of Christ to-day. Could it have been possible that, in stretching beyond the requirement of Christ, the apostles *had* even demanded baptism to demonstrate the visibility of the church or of individual membership, they would have soon dropped it upon discovering that it did not answer the end sought.

This part of the inquiry relating to a Christian church has been reasoned in the above catechetical way, that the simplicity of it may induce many in their own minds to add to these questions, upon subjects relating to ecclesiastical matters, and detect more of the unscriptural demands of unreasonable men, who lord it over God's heritage: but here is enough to prove that faith, and not baptism in any sense, is the

way of entering, by Christ, the door into the church. We follow on to the concluding remarks upon this review of *the church.*

SECT. IX. — THE ENDS ANSWERED BY A CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE WORLD.

It is of vast importance to consider what purposes are designed by the Lord in maintaining the visible church in this world. There is nothing that the Lord has designed or ordained, without a special end in view; and it is certain that a church called out from the common mass of human, sinful beings, must have high and exalted designs to answer. Let us contemplate two or three, at least.

It is a witness for God and truth. *The church is the ground and pillar of truth.* It is a living, standing miracle among men — a supernatural phenomenon in the world, above the comprehension of natural men. John says, "Beloved, the world knoweth us not, for it knew Him not." As it was with Abraham, who was called out from the idolatrous of mankind, that he and his descendants should be a distinguished and peculiar people in the earth, living witnesses, serv-

ing and worshipping the only true God, so the church has ever answered this end, whether regarded in the patriarchal, Levitical, or Christian dispensation. She is a standing miracle of Divine grace, witnessing in a sinful world the faithfulness of God — the covenant God of truth. How essentially important it is, then, that this church should always be a spiritual assembly, living above the character of a common society — a worldly combination of men!

The church is a light in a dark place. "Darkness hath covered the earth, and gross darkness the people;" but the church is a light, and is therefore to "arise and shine." To this end was the exhortation of Jesus to his disciples: "No man, when he hath lighted a candle, setteth it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that it might give light to all that are in the house." And again: "So let your light shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven." If religion does not make the character purer — that the church, or the called-out of God, may reflect his mighty goodness and perfection — what is the use of the church in the world? Are we not called "out of darkness into his marvellous

light, to show forth his praises" who hath called us? Can this be done by biting and devouring each other; by division and worldly clubs, calling themselves churches; by seeking to be rivals — by one sect saying to another sect, "Stand by, I am holier than thou;" by making the Lord's table a partisan, a denominational table; by division, strife, and envy? *No*, says the Saviour: "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, when ye have love one to another." Worldly societies set themselves up one against the other for worldly, party interests; but it must not be so with Christians. Ye are one, ye are brethren, and therefore by union and love should seek to glorify God. If we let the love of Christ rule in our hearts, we shall have love to all the brethren; and the party-spirit of shutting up the table of the Lord from all that do not see eye to eye with us, will perish from our thoughts, with all other such antichristian notions. In this way the universal church will become like a light in the world, answering the grand end to which she is here called of God.

The church is a blessing in the world; she is said to be the salt of the earth. By the gracious Spirit she savors of holiness and God; therefore

the world is preserved from the destruction which would otherwise arise from the leprosy of sin and the putrefaction attendant upon universal wickedness. But the church only savors of Divine grace, as she lives a spiritual life to God. She must be seasoned with grace herself; but how can she be while she seeks conformity to the world, preferring human governments to the government of the Holy Spirit? how can she be, as factious and divided into piecemeal, contending for human distinctions when she should be a compact body, holding to Christ the head, and as Paul says—"speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4: 15, 16).

We must cast away worldly legislation in the church;—and, though not seeing eye to eye, and having our different denominational names among men, we must see and feel that we are one church, and love as brethren: with-

out this there will be no gracious influence, and where is our saltness without it? Jesus said, "Have salt in yourselves," when explaining its importance thus: "If the salt hath lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men." O that we may be more than ever concerned for this grace and love!

So far as we have adhered to the word of God, and the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, so far we have dealt out a death-blow to the idea of organized societies being Christian churches. The wound may be covered up, and many may drink of the cup of error, with which they have long made free; they may attempt to "heal the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace;" they may linger on through the remaining dark days of the Gentile times; but the period is not far distant when judgment will begin at the house of God, and then these worldly systems must go — and, in the millennial dispensation, the truth of what has been here so feebly set forth shall shine as the sun in his strength.

PART V.

ORGANIZED BODIES.

SECTION I. — SCRIPTURALLY-ORGANIZED CHURCHES.

We have seen in the foregoing part, upon *the church*, that the way in which "church" is used by modern Christian societies is a perversion of the term; and that such institutions, governed by their own laws, as compact bodies, without any intention to adopt regulations for their observance that might oppose the letter and spirit of the Scriptures, are not in that compact relation churches. They may be good and useful societies, and appendages to the church or churches of Christ in the world, but are not churches. Therefore, though in themselves innocent things, yet, by assuming the title of *church*, in the exercise of authority over the

consciences of the true members of the body of Christ, and by asserting such right as the legitimate church, they become fearful indeed.

There is a sense in which the true church is an organized body, but not by human construction. It is vastly different to the societies observing human laws. The called-out by God in the character of a congregation or assembly of spiritual worshippers is a compact and united assembly, the resemblance of which can not be found among the most-approved and well-governed societies in the universe. The Holy Spirit is present with the church. The several members, inspired with grace in their hearts, move to the one company as bone moved to bone in Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones. God said it, and it was done: "Behold, I will cause breath to come into you, and ye shall live: and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live, and ye shall know that I am the Lord" (Ezek. 37: 5, 6).

The Holy Spirit is the acknowledged president in the church of Christ. By his gracious influence the law of love cements and binds the

whole together as one body. He fills all with his gracious, illuminating presence and influence, and there is a society, *a church* holding to Christ the head, as the bond of true heavenly union, called out by the Divine Spirit, and living and worshipping in the unity of the faith and in the bond of peace. Can there be such an organization as this, where every part is so arranged for the usefulness of the whole, as that like bone to bone in the human frame so they unite? Paul, under the figure of a body, thus expresses himself concerning the organization of the church: "Holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God" (Colossians 2: 19). And, under the figure of a building, he thus writes to the Ephesians: "Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph.

2: 19–22). Such is a church in the scriptural sense—an organized assembly of the called-out, holding to Christ the head, fitted into a body for usefulness by the presiding influence of the Holy Spirit, and cemented in a living spiritual temple for the true worship of God by the love of the Eternal One.

But in other respects the company of believers may be regarded as an organized assembly, whether they be few or many. The great Head of the church having promised his presence with the congregated few assembled in his name, and he being the bond of union, there is a church; and in its organization for religious observances he has mercifully given gifts unto men. In this relation a church is a well-ordered assembly, for, as Paul says—"He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4: 11–13).

The church under such an organization is a

worshipping assembly. There are suitable gifts bestowed, and these exercised are for the edification and increase of the whole. Prayer, praise, exhortation, preaching the word, breaking of bread, and other instituted ordinances of Heaven, make the assembly manifestly a church of Christ and of God, "the pillar and the ground of the truth." No threat of discipline will be required to constrain the members of such a body to assemble for such glorious and blessed purposes — no covenant to which they need be called to subscribe, pledging themselves to attend at those seasons when the church is convened together in one place; for if they decline in spiritual things, and despise their privileges, a word will seem to quicken them: "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is."

The church, too, as an organized society, has authority for the exercise of suitable and necessary discipline. The laws necessary for the correction of misconduct and abuses are simple and forcible. The unchristian conduct which one member may show toward another is thus to be observed: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between

thee and him alone: if he will hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother; but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican" (Matt. 18: 15–17). The act must be a very grave one to which reference is made, by the very course pursued, and we see that the whole line of conduct to be observed, is designed to set forth desire and concern to bring the offender to contrition and restoration.

In the same chapter from which the above quotation is made, we find Peter inquiring to what degree forgiveness may be extended to an offending brother. He says, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" To which Jesus replied, "I say not unto thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven." Discipline is to be exercised after the most extended forbearance and long-cherished mercy, as the Lord shows by the way in which we as continual sinners are forgiven by him.

In acts of immoral life, and in renouncing the faith, there is the power invested in the church to excommunicate, without further forbearance; but, upon godly penitence being manifested, there is to be restoration. Paul directs this course concerning the incestuous person in 1 Corinthians 5 : 4, 5 : "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." And it is evident, from what follows, that they were not to eat the Lord's Supper with such an offender among them, but to purge out this leaven, that they may be unleavened. So in reference to the restoration of the same individual, who had manifestly become penitent, repenting of his sin before all. We find the apostle again thus addressing the church concerning him: "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him."

The above few examples may lead the mind to contemplate what is set forth in the New Testament with regard to the authority invested in the church to exercise discipline, and also the spirit in which it should be done. We shall find that, as an organized body in the scriptural sense, there is no license for coercive treatment, or the exercise of any discipline for matters of private judgment, or differences of opinion relative to ordinances, &c. It relates to graver matters affecting the apparent sincerity of discipleship to Christ; and how tenderly and cautiously this is proceeded with may be left for the reader to judge who prayerfully peruses the word of God. Whatever is done to any individual member of the professing church of Christ, in which the discipline is exercised in a spirit of self-gratification, pride, or revenge, is neither approved nor recognised by God.

Every society of true believers, as a church, ought to have interest one in the other, and should be mutual sympathizers and mutual helpers, for they have need one of the other. It is also certain that, though a little assembly is designated a church, and is truly so, yet there is no exclusiveness about it, so as to be shut up to it-

self. In a most important sense, its state, and every action, has relation to the one universal church, the whole body of Christ; therefore, while feeling a sort of independence, as owning no Lord but one, and feeling responsibility only to Christ, yet there is an indissoluble union to the whole body, and the relative duties bind us to the whole, so that really there can not exist that independence which is now becoming a current doctrine, and even boasted in, as though there were free license to treat other sections of the church of Christ at pleasure. The universal church is compacted as every several company, and they make the whole body of which Christ is the head complete.

When we regard the church of Christ so constituted in the observance of his laws, and the discharge of wholesome and salutary discipline, what a picture is presented of tenderness, sincerity, sympathy, and firmness, all crowned with the grace of humility! Everything is pointed out, and every provision made, by the Head of the church, to administer to her prosperity; and, by the proper observance of all, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the church must constantly look forth, "fair as the moon, clear

as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

SECTION II. — UNSCRIPTURALLY-ORGANIZED CHRISTIAN BODIES.

Christian organized societies, now commonly called *churches*, among all denominations, present a perfect contrast to those we have just noticed. We call them *churches*, to be understood, because by universal adoption they are distinguished by the name, though not authorized by scripture. They truly bear the open stamp upon them that they are the work of men, from the hierarchy of the pope down to the most insignificant and obscure body of partisan Christians in the world. Wherever other obligations and requirements are presented to notice, either apart from or as an appendix to those contained in the New Testament, antichrist is clearly to be discovered.

The first prominent feature in such organizations is the invented terms of church-membership. This takes the whole matter of the church out of the hands of Christ. Nothing can be more certain than that Christ himself makes the

true members of his church, and puts them into that relationship, to be owned as such by the whole body when they are renewed by the Holy Spirit.

Now it is manifest that, in societies called churches, a discretionary pleasure is exercised concerning what believers in Jesus they shall receive into the church, and what believers they shall cast away. This is a most awful assumption of power. All that believe in Christ to the salvation of the soul are his church on earth, and his only visible church. It would be as impossible really to alter this state of things as it would be to overturn the heavens: they are in the church by faith, and none can put them out.

But existing regulations among Christian societies disown this church, and trample Christ and his church under foot. They proclaim that they have to make churches, and sit in council upon the maintenance and increase of them: therefore terms of admission are boldly declared.

It would be an unheard-of assumption of authority, if, upon an addition to a numerous family, some of the children were to group together and say of the new-born infant—'Before we allow this child to be one of us, to share the

common rights and benefits of the family, we will require certain things to be observed, and then we will decide whether this little stranger shall be the child of our common parents'!— though the father had actually put the babe among his children, and given it participation in the inheritance of his home to share parental care, a father's blessing, protection, and support. The usual terms of admission to church-membership and the Lord's table display all this folly of the family group; and, further, *fearfully usurp rights*, and so rebel against Christ in his authority over the church.

It may be thought by many that the way in which we have brought out the scripture development of Christian ordinances and the gospel church or churches, that we have exhibited many things which are universally admitted to be in the New Testament, and which all denominations have agreed to consider non-essential. The agreement of Christians upon essential and non-essential points is a nice matter to judge. We presume that it ought to be taken for granted that, in the wisdom of God, no non-essential things are set forth in the New Testament. It is not a book of words, simply for the sake of

making a book, but every sentence is a sentence of inspiration, and written for our learning, to describe what God requires of us. But if we consider the term *non-essential* to apply to the matter of our salvation, we then say there is nothing essential to salvation but believing in the Lord Jesus with all the heart; and faith is only the means to an end, by laying hold of the salvation which *Jehovah* has provided for us. Therefore it is written: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

It may be said that, to turn back to the Scriptures to follow exclusively what is there for rule and government, would be to revolutionize present Christian churches. If such would be the consequences to follow upon lifting up the mirror of truth, and examining professedly religious societies called *churches* in the light of Divine revelation, we can not help it. We ask, 'Is the likeness drawn a likeness? Is there faithful dealing by us with God's word—the mind of the Spirit in the New Testament?'

To reason about consequences of certain principles laid down were folly, without this pri-

mary question concerning what God saith; and to reason about consequences after it is established, that what is advanced is in accordance with the mind of God, is nothing more nor less than to say that the systems of men are better suited to accomplish a desired end, and to maintain proper order in their accomplishment, than that which the Lord has laid down in his word.

The question must be, 'Have we dealt faithfully in what we have exhibited from God's word, in relation to the two symbolical ordinances of the Christian dispensation, and the character of a Christian church given us by the Holy Spirit?' We cast off all the sophistry of irrelevant argument, to which recourse has hitherto ever been had, to give a plausible aspect to error. Much precious time has been worse than wasted, and many books been written proving nothing, yet answering an evil end, like casting dust in the eyes of men to prevent their seeing.

We say, truth must be exhibited, and that alone will stand before God: if it offend, or demolish our cherished plans and purposes, it is the more evident that we have followed a perverse way, and to persist in what scripture disallows is a fearful omen. "Wo unto him that

striveth with his Maker!" is written for our warning.

But the plan pursued in bringing forward the New Testament, has not been so much with the view to insist upon the observance of the *minutia*, as it has been in some respects to confound the foolish boasting of many, who profess to follow exactly the words of inspiration in all matters, and demand the same from others as terms of communion. It is not an uncommon thing to hear the advocates of certain men-invented systems, when apparently defending every particular connected therewith, exclaim, if any disposition is offered to demur, "See thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount"!—applying the charge given by the Lord to Moses respecting the making of the tabernacle, recorded by Paul in Hebrews 8: 5, to the Christian church; and presuming they have "thus saith the Lord" for all that they observe, they ignorantly conclude they have a victory by this mere use of words. Take their words, or rather the direction given to Moses about the tabernacle and its vessels, and apply it to the things which they advocate and call a true imitation of the plan, and ordinances, and

churches, in the New Testament — and, behold, there is juxtaposition (as we shall proceed to explain) to all we meet with in the New Testament, in either requirement, observance, or spirit.

SECTION III. — TERMS OF CHURCH-MEMBERSHIP.

THERE are various requirements made besides faith in Christ, before admission to what are called Christian churches can be obtained. Each society of Christians has something peculiar to itself as terms for admission. But, without regarding other requirements, it is enough to consider the one of BAPTISM. It is plain that this is nowhere required in God's word. It was never considered so in the first and second centuries of the Christian church. That it was enjoined on all believers to be baptized must be admitted; but to be baptized in order to be members of the church — the family of God — the assembly of saints — *is not true.* Nothing but the idea of baptismal regeneration, or, in other words, that baptism made Christians, gave rise to this error.

They who maintain that baptism is a prerequisite to membership in the church of Christ,

and deny that baptism makes Christians, are most inconsistent: they drop that part which is repugnant to their spiritual minds (of the error introduced by the working of the man of sin, and the mystery of iniquity), and hold to that which is less offensive; if they renounce baptismal regeneration, which Antichrist makes the door to the church, they should reject the whole, and return to the pure principles of Christianity.

Baptism must either precede regeneration, and professed faith in Christ, or follow upon it. If it precede it, it makes Christians, and is, as multitudes affirm, "*the door to the church.*" If it follow it, it is after they are members of Christ's church, and so can not be a prerequisite for membership, but a Christian ordinance. There can be no third position. The truth is palpably manifest: there is no ground for asserting that baptism is a door to the church, and yet reject baptismal regeneration. *It is an antichristian doctrine* to affirm that baptism is a door to the church; by saying so, it is made a term of membership, and goes to destroy the acknowledgment of the true church of Christ; by such a term the authority of Christ is superseded by being invested with men.

But it may be said, this is an extreme view, which may be true in relation to the papal church, and some protestant churches maintaining baptismal regeneration, but not so with others. It may be said, there are those who believe in baptism only as an outward ordinance by which there is the avowed profession of Christianity; and it is by this outward profession that they are received to the outward visible church; it is an open acknowledgment of their conversion and belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. But this is only gilding over the error, like using different devices to palm off counterfeit coin. Baptism is for no such purpose; the Master requires no such thing; he makes the members of the visible church, and the change of character, by the experience of what the Lord has done for the soul, will evidence it—baptism can not. The vilest hypocrite can be baptized, but he is no member of the invisible, nor ought he to be considered of the visible church. It fills one with amazement to hear baptists proclaim that the practice of infant baptism and baptismal regeneration fills the professing Christian world with hypocrites, and is subversive of the true interests and spirituality of the church,

while they are introducing a host of hypocrites to the church by making baptism the door to the church!

We care not what you demand as terms of fellowship to any particular society. You may have your organized companies, and demand the consent and approval to all the things you choose to invent, be it an acknowledgment to a certain creed which you have adopted; a subscription to certain laws, by which all shall be governed; baptism as a prerequisite to the fellowship of this society; or whatever else you may please, in order to keep together a snug and compact society: but in such a capacity never pretend to say that your society is the church of Christ, or to exercise authority over any of Heaven's institutions, ordinances, or privileges, belonging to his church; otherwise, the *wo* denounced by Jesus upon the scribes and Pharisees, who made void the law of God by their tradition, will come upon you, and we can not but fear that the commencement of its execution has already fallen. The Spirit's influences are restrained, and, with all your human inventions and organizations of Christian societies, instead of being like united bodies, in peace

and love, they are disjointed and scattered abroad, as the dry bones through the valley of vision, which was the true picture of God's ancient people when they forsook his fear, and walked not in his commandments.

From the circumstance of there being no authority in the word of God to make baptism the door to the visible church, or a prerequisite to church-membership, those who advocate it point with a kind of triumph to universal church practice. It is easy for the baptist to say, 'Christian denominations generally so regard it;' but if the same answers were made to them concerning some other things which they have discountenanced, they would be indignant at being referred to such authority. Tell them that they must hear the voice of the church—that because she says baptismal regeneration is true, and infant sprinkling is Christian baptism, *they must regard the voice of the church*—will they not say, "To the word and the testimony"—that they esteem nothing as binding on them that they have not a "thus saith the Lord" for? But now, faith in Christ makes members of Christ's church. *He* proclaims nothing else, the Scriptures require nothing else; yet these

very individuals, who denounce church authority, because in this case they can not appeal to the word and the testimony, they want something else, and say, 'Hear the church'—and turn to the systems of men, ready to acknowledge that they follow them even in their heresy.

SECTION IV.—MODES OF ADMISSION TO THE CHURCH.

ANOTHER regulation of organized bodies where human laws subvert the authority of Christ, is discovered in the mode of admission to membership. Members in baptist churches at least are admitted by the vote of the body. Now we ask, who ever discovered such a system in the New Testament? It may be found in carnal and worldly clubs, originated by men devoid of all religious sentiment, but it is a most barefaced infringement upon the authority of Christ. It would seem necessarily to follow upon the subversion of Christ's power over the church; for his church once cast down, and men's systems set up, we can look for nothing else in all that follows but mere human authority.

Here stands out most prominently the absurdity of what we considered in the foregoing sec-

tion, where part of the heresy of antichristian doctrine was rejected, and the other part retained. By thus retaining one part, there is now in what we are considering a development of still grosser error as a consequence, such as that into which the papal church has never yet fallen. Her doctrine of baptismal regeneration is a cursed heresy, but she keeps to the whole, she makes Christians, consequently she makes them members of the church by baptism; and, by the right of being Christian, which was secured to them in baptism, they are acknowledged members: so that she pretends to no further power. Being Christians, they can not be kept out of the church, as it would be usurping the headship of Christ more than that flagrant antichristian church has yet ever done.

Now mark — close baptists say faith in Christ must be, or there can be no membership. *So says Christ:* "I am the door: by me if any man enter in he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture" (John 10: 9). On the contrary, they who believe not are not members of the church, as Christ said: "Ye believe not because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you" (John 10: 26). Faith, then, is

a prerequisite; it makes manifest the called out from the world to the company of the congregation of believers. Then they add, '*Baptism* is a prerequisite, it is the door of the church—and none are members of the church till they are baptized.' *So says not Christ*, but it is *the voice from the papal church*, because baptism regenerates and makes Christians. (Baptism stands as an ordinance of Christ's kingdom—a blessed ordinance—and can not be put aside, or treated with indifference; but it is no prerequisite to union with the visible church. Christ adds to the church when he calls sinners by his grace—not when they are baptized, or there would be the highest pretensions established for the false doctrine of baptismal regeneration: they are shut up to the belief that baptism is an ordinance of the church, or an ordinance by which individuals are made Christians, which has before been intimated, or there is no truth in saying two and two make four.) Then with the baptists there is a third requisite before coming into the church. Faith is not enough; then comes faith and baptism: but these are not enough—but the vote of the church is paramount, and decides if the baptized believer shall

be a member or not! This is too gross for the mother of harlots and the great antichristian apostacy. We question if the devil himself would be so bold, that, after Christ's prerequisite is witnessed, by faith in his name for salvation, and the antichristian prerequisite is observed in baptism—a third party should stand up, claim supremacy, decide the matter, and it may be in a moment, at will and pleasure, veto the decision of both Christ and Antichrist!

But the above are not the whole of the requirements: they may be styled the *first-class prerequisites* to admission to these organized societies called "*churches.*" The *second class*, which we will call *minor prerequisites* for admission, are multiplied beyond all idea. They vary as circumstances vary, and well they may, for, after the boundary of the New Testament is passed, they can have no other law to guide them but the passions and inclinations of a majority. But, to obtain the sufferances of the society, their prerequisites must be subscribed to: it may be that you are not to be a member of a benefit-society, or freemasons' lodge, or any odd-fellow society; that you shall be an abolitionist, or not an abolitionist; or a member of a

temperance-society, &c. These may be prerequisites in some so-called churches, and many other things equally absurd. Whatever such churches demand you must yield, or they veto your being a member.

It may be inquired, 'How is the church to be preserved from amalgamation with the world, and how to be preserved from being entirely overrun with unchristian characters, but by the exercise of discretionary power?' Again: 'If the church has no voice in the admission of members to her body, who is to say how long she is to continue a Christian church?'

There is reason in all such questions, and they ought to be duly regarded. It unquestionably is obligatory on the part of the church to keep herself as free as possible from the world and from men of the world—very much more so than is done at the present, with all the process of admission to fellowship. It is but too evident that societies bearing the name of Christian churches, under the present plan of voting in members to the body, have not shone very brightly. Though members have been required to subscribe to such a diversity of regulations, and promised to abide by certain observances,

and have passed through so many preliminaries, it has done nothing to keep the church pure, or from being crowded out by lifeless professors and characters unsound in the faith.

In this view of the state of professing Christian societies, it may be asked, 'How does it come to pass?' We shall probably find a solution by considering how little is thought of godliness as the primary and one grand consideration in augmenting numbers, and how much is thought of the various things invented as grounds of admission to their societies; and, since the reception or rejection is to rest upon sanctioning these whims and fancies of men, it is more favorable for hypocrites than for sincere and truly-converted souls. These with the New Testament would say, 'They want to lay such burdens upon my conscience as neither Christ requires nor I am able to endure, if I bow to his supreme authority.' Hypocrites, who have no conscience in the matter of true Christianity, for the sake of the name of being reckoned among Christians in their societies will say 'Amen' to all that is demanded, and obtain the vote of the majority to be reckoned among the body; while the minority, trodden down, are

afraid to speak: the padlock is put upon their lips, while they groan in spirit, and cry out to the Lord, as another and another is added to the body—'Alas, no evidence there, O Lord, of thy gracious work upon the heart!'

The church has no authority to exercise any action in the way of vote for the addition of members. The interests of the church are better guarded by the Holy Spirit than by human enactments. We are required by the Scriptures of the New Testament to receive those whom Christ has received; and the way of knowing them is by their communicating, perhaps by another, the merciful dealings of the Lord; and where there is a pastor, it may be more properly through him. If the church be a spiritual assembly, it will soon feel and recognise the hand of the Lord in this work: a union of spirit will be the result, and with it a cheerful acknowledgment that Christ has added another soul to the church.

Let this be the only way into the church—let it bear the aspect of a spiritual body, disencumbered of worldly laws and worldly policy—and we shall find but very few who are not sincerely converted to God, applying for fellow-

ship with the church. But should any not taught by God apply, it would at once be seen by the presiding pastor and the members also that there was not a change of heart, and then it would be said to such: 'We do not see that you are converted by the grace of God; you had better examine yourself by the word of God'—pointing out to such what is necessary to be done by Christ for the soul in order to be a member of his church. Such remarks, with the promise of the whole body to pray earnestly for the conversion of the individual, may be a blessing to such and to the church.

If such a course could be adopted, and all the systems which men have invented be laid aside, there is no doubt but there would be such purity in the church, such prosperity in spiritual things, such heavenly light and joy, that the church would appear like a new creation, and, if continued, would evidence the presence and power of the Divine Spirit in a way and manner that has not been known perhaps since the closing of the first century of the Christian era. The purity and distinction of the church from the world is not to be by human schemes, but by a close observance of the requirements of Christ

and dependence upon the gracious Spirit. We may rest assured that, if the members be holy, the world will not intrude upon the church. If we must have our denominational societies, let us have them in such a way that in the ordinances of Divine institution we may feel that we are one with the universal church, and no schismatics.

SECT. V. — THE RELATIVE POSITION OF ORDINANCES.

The way in which the two symbolical ordinances given by Christ for his disciples to observe are made relatively to bear one upon the other is an assumption of organized societies. These two symbolical ordinances we have considered. They have been exalted by the church out of their place, and in the maintenance of this sinful magnitude of two simple institutions the church has been rent into a thousand pieces; they have been made to subserve the grossest heresies hell could invent, such as baptismal regeneration and the doctrine of transubstantiation. Under false notions on these two ordinances every denomination of Christians has been racked, pained, and tossed upon the waves of

bitter controversy. Every law of Heaven for the Christian church has been constantly trampled under foot in the maddened excitement about these two ordinances, while comparatively no notice has been taken of the dishonor done to other institutions of Christ.

We have not now to turn to the institutions themselves; the views entertained of them have been given under their respective heads. Our inquiry now is, how far they are relatively combined; what relation the one bears to the other; and how far there can be necessity to neglect the observance of the one until the other has been obeyed.

It is maintained, by baptists advocating restricted communion, that they are so connected the one to the other, and have such a relative dependence the one upon the other, that it is ecclesiastically impossible to get at the one without first duly observing the other. These premises are decidedly false: they are so upon the very ground that positive institutions of a different nature must of necessity be independent one of the other, unless by an express law they are united, as were circumcision and the passover.

Turn to the law of the institutions from the great Lawgiver himself—and there can not be the slightest inference that Christ ever intended that the one should have any relation to the other. As positive institutes of the kingdom of Christ, they differ nothing from every other command of Christ, only that they are symbolical ordinances. They have a bearing one upon the other just as much as all the commands of Christ have, and no more.

It is affirmed that baptism has the first claim to attention as an initiatory ordinance to the Christian church, and then the Lord's Supper as a church ordinance should afterward be observed, and that this order ought not to be disturbed. Baptism doubtless has the first claim to the Christian's attention, but not upon the ground of its being the initiatory ordinance to the church; the fallacy of this assumption has already been exploded. It is therefore enough here to say that this is not in the word of God. It may be, for aught we know, in some of the heretical writings of some of the first apostates; but in the New Testament Christ added to the church, and then they were baptized, as a profession of that faith which they had, the result

of their being by his Spirit made members of Christ and heirs of the kingdom. But in point of time, when the ordinances were instituted, there is no ground for regarding baptism as having priority of claim; it is unquestionably false to say that baptism was instituted before the Lord's Supper, and we are compelled to conclude that there is not an individual who would assert it, were it not that they can not find sufficient props to sustain their cherished dogmas and exclusive denominational creeds without dragging in John's baptism, and making it a Christian ordinance: but that sophistry we have exploded. The eucharist or Lord's Supper was the first symbolical ordinance instituted: this was on the memorable eve of the crucifixion of Jesus. The ordinance of Christian baptism was not instituted till after Christ's resurrection, nor observed until the day of pentecost.

It is affirmed that there is such a connection existing between the two ordinances, that none have a right to commemorate the Lord's death till they have been baptized. We ask for proof, for we have never found it in the word of God, nor the shadow of semblance to defend the assertion; all the evidence adduced is to this effect

(quotation from R. Fuller on "Terms of Communion," page 190): "By the *standards of all churches*, baptism is required before any candidate is admitted to membership; and *this is the reason* why baptism has always been regarded as a prerequisite to the supper." Such is the "proof" of a stickler for restricted communion among baptists; surely he had better have gone to sleep than to have written it! What does it amount to? Is it not, in effect, saying—'I have no scriptural authority; but never mind, *hear the church*—that will do when we can not get better evidence'?

We now turn to scripture for proof that the position is a glaringly false one. The supper was eaten before the institution of the ordinance of baptism, and that, too, as administered by Christ to the assembled apostles before he suffered, as Paul emphatically describes—"the same night in which he was betrayed." And, after his resurrection, he was known to the two disciples at Emmaus as he brake bread and gave to them; and probably on other occasions, before his ascension, he administered the supper to his disciples. They were unbaptized, for the ordinance of baptism had not then been insti-

tuted. The words of Jesus in administering the supper prove that nothing was required of the communicant but a discerning of the Lord's body and blood; and is it possible that Jesus could have designed that the unbaptized should have been prohibited from commemorating his death, when he was the cause of such a striking example to the contrary, and enjoined its repetition, and practised it, too, without any provision of the kind? Again: when he instituted baptism, he would of course have said that in future time baptism must be observed by all disciples, or they must be prohibited from eating his supper; but not a word to this effect proceeded from his lips. It is, in truth, just about as evident that the one is depending upon the other, as that the salvation of man is depending upon either, which all will assuredly reject as a fatal error.

We are advocates for baptism, to occupy its right position, and for it to be administered in its true scriptural way to the legitimate subjects. We would be second to none in enjoining the observance of all things whatsoever the Lord hath commanded; but if any do not observe the obligation as we regard it in the Scrip-

tures, but verily believe they have obeyed the command in another way, then God forbid that we should lord it over his heritage, and take rule and authority which he has never delegated. *What*, say to the people whom Christ redeemed with his own blood, 'You shall not come to commemorate his precious death, because you have not trodden in the steps that I approve'! Multitudes do this, and think they verily do God service, as much as did Saul of Tarsus when he persecuted the saints of God.

SECTION VI. — THE AUTHORITY EXERCISED OVER THE LORD'S TABLE.

Christ has spread a table in this wilderness, to which he has, without exception, invited all his family to come. It is spread for the children, and there they are to eat and drink by faith, and partake of such memorials of his body and blood as he has instituted, which are bread and wine. What can be more simple, what more significant, what more unrestricted, than what the Lord has here required of all to observe?

This feast is for a company, few or many,

when come together; all are welcome whom Christ has called by his Spirit from the world into the fellowship of his gospel and kingdom of his grace. In this company no one engages to do what he does as accountable to his fellow-man, or as judging his brother, or the motives of any present; the one thing is to have fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, to discern him in all that is now done at the feast, and to seek the personal realization of the blessings of salvation — an interest in the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. No heretic should be there; no immoral person should be there; no unrenewed person should be there: each of such class of characters, so far as we can discern them, should be shut out. Everything so far is clear in the word of God; all the rest are made holy by the Spirit in regeneration, and are living by faith upon the Son of God: they are the welcomed and invited guests by Jesus.

They who have given themselves to a church, and are of the visible company, and in the habit of assembling with the disciples of such a locality as they reside in, for Divine worship, have undoubted right to the table of the Lord anywhere and everywhere within the compass of

the whole universal church — the table never being spread for a society of Christians in the scriptural sense, but for *the church*. It therefore can only be required of any individual, travel where he may over the globe, and be of whatever denomination of faithful and true Christians, to report himself as a brother in Christ, and of an assembly or a church in a certain locality, and his right is common with all to the Lord's table. This is the true spirit of the New Testament, and according to the laws of Christ and the observances of the inspired apostles. Baptized or unbaptized was never the question: the fact of belonging to a church of the faithful was a passport to the table of the Lord all over the world.

But is this regarded and practised? It is not; and hence has arisen the strong party-feelings leading to every evil, and the adoption of the most flagrant errors. Christ's beloved and bride is one, but usurpers and dogmatical fanatics have torn her limb from limb; they have piecemealed her out, as plunderers and robbers will divide their booty. Imperfect men, though Christians, are not now destined to see eye to eye; they have therefore to bear and forbear

with each other's differences of opinions, while they hold to Christ by faith for salvation.

Authority exercised over the Lord's table so as to exclude from it any of the members of the visible church, is a presumption, and nothing short of rebellion against Christ in his kingdom. He has said to all his followers, "*Come;*" but they stand in the way of approach, saying to whomsoever they will, '*You shall not come!*' Can there be more determined opposition to the will of Christ than this? This is the plain statement of the case between Christ and those of his professed disciples who claim any right to keep from his table a single individual member of any church. It can not be supposed, for a moment, that any true Christian could assume this solemn position with wilful determination, but under the conviction that there is full permission given by the Saviour; yea, that he requires of his disciples this exercise of discretionary power. Therefore, we do not view the act in the light of wilful rebellion against Christ, or a wicked disposition to lord it over the saints, but as the fruit of misguided zeal; and though this may sound harsh to some, yet it allows no qualification: it is a monstrous practice, and

the most favorable Christian construction that can be put upon such unfounded claim to authority must be, that "they know not what manner of spirit they are of."

Governed, then, by an erroneous impression that a power is invested with them, we must endeavor to examine some of the grounds upon which it is said to be supported, and expose the fallacy of the system. Our attention is more particularly drawn to the restricted communionists of the baptist denomination. It is with them we have to do, and with them we find the most intolerant conduct pursued toward other Christian denominations — at least of all the protestant denominations throughout Christendom — in dogmatical pretensions and assumed power over Christians and churches.

SECTION VII. — THE RESTRICTED COMMUNION OF ORGANIZED BAPTISTS' CHURCHES NOT AUTHORIZED IN SCRIPTURE.

We are not aware that, among all the advocates for restricted communion (that is, for power to shut up the Lord's table to their little parties), there has been any appeal to the word of

God, as directly authorizing it. The authority therefore must be acknowledged as inferential; no baptist in his exclusiveness professes to find higher authority than this.

They have sought in vain for direct precept, or any sentence, however obscure, that could bear any turning to appear like a precept. It is true in some of their writings we find them saying that 'Christ has commanded that baptism should precede eating the Lord's Supper,' and that 'Christ has commanded that baptism should be a prerequisite to the table of the Lord.' But such sentences, which often appear in the writings of the advocates for restricted communion, are only a mere flourish of words, and perfectly untrue. Therefore they never give scripture for it, because they can not, but support the assumption that it is Christ's command by appealing to the sayings of early Christians and their practices — to the Romish church, and forsooth to protestant pedobaptists — while they most fully declare, throughout their writings, that pedobaptism is not Christian baptism at all.

Where is the consistency of this? It is a miserable subterfuge upon which to found so solemn an act as that of shutting up the table of

the Lord to a little party, saying, 'It is delegated authority from Christ,' without one word in *the Book* to prove that any authority is given, but, on the contrary, every word bearing on the subject in the New Testament, and in the spirit of the Revelation, leading to conclusions perfectly at variance with the assumption.

But now it is admitted by some candid baptists, who have studied the subject, that restricted communion is sustained by inference. In a forensic sense, inferential testimony is often considered the most conclusive. This may be for many reasons, when it relates to matters of a worldly nature between man and man, where at best they are sinners and erring mortals; positive testimony may be foresworn, while inferential may be convincingly truthful; but in inferential conclusions in matters of religion, where it regards God and man, the position is vastly weakened.

Strictly speaking, inferential conclusions in almost all matters of a weighty bearing on religion are to be discarded, because the great Lawgiver has in every such instance taken care that decisions shall not be so arrived at by fallible men in relation to the government of his king-

dom. The proper position here to take is—'What saith the Master in this particular matter of doubt?' And if the answer is, 'He hath said nothing,' it is evidently going out of the true and legitimate way to suppose he meant something, but did not speak concerning it, upon the ground that his people might draw inferences in after-times from what others may have been supposed to have done, and thus establish the ground of authority.

We must confess that no inferences would do for us in matters so grave, even could they be made to border on precept. Nothing but a direct command from Christ could make us favor restricted communion. The matter itself is manifest, in the light of truth, that nothing short of an absolute command should induce any to shut out Christ's followers from the table which he has spread in the emblems of his body and blood, seeing his command to observe it is unrestricted.

SECT. VIII. — THE GROUNDS UPON WHICH RESTRICTED COMMUNION IS DEFENDED.

In the inferential testimony for restricted communion, the following are the most weighty, and

perhaps all the reasons adduced, worthy of notice, to justify the practice:—

1. The priority of baptism to the Lord's Supper, as an institution of Christ's kingdom. But this is not true; and if it were, it is nothing to the purpose—which would be unnecessary to explain, having demonstrated the position to be false when proving John's baptism not Christian. The thing is altogether reversed, and what is advanced upon this ground of authority turns out to be in favor of unrestricted communion. This, therefore, is swept away from under these advocates of restricted communion.

2. From the apostolic commission to baptize, it is said that "the commission clearly indicates that baptism preceded the Lord's Supper, and is prerequisite to it" (J. B. Taylor on restricted communion, page 7). Doubtless baptism is an ordinance instituted for observance at the very outset of a Christian career; it was designed for the beginning and not for the middle or end of a Christian life; but a profession of Christianity can be made without it, and is by nine tenths of Christians, as baptists allow, for they do not admit that those have been baptized who were sprinkled in infancy, and have a right to the

table of the Lord in their own denominations. But where is the prerequisiteness to admission to the Lord's table in baptism? has it anything to do with a positive institution of another order? or, did Christ give it forth as his will that the one should rest upon the other? He absolutely makes the observance of the one and the other rest upon faith, a common prerequisite to both. Is it not unaccountable that men should contend that the observance of one of these ordinances is a prerequisite to the other? Besides, as we have shown in the foregoing section, Christ administered the supper to the unbaptized;—surely this is sufficient of itself, without another word, to clear away this second inferential authority.

3. Apostolic example is adduced as another evidence confirmatory that there is right to the exercise of this authority. But where is the apostolic example? do we find any instance on record where a believer was rejected by the apostles from the table of the Lord because he was not baptized? *No, not one.* 'But this is not what we mean,' they will say, 'by *apostolic example*, but that of unbaptized believers going to the Lord's table.' That they did not, is only

suppositious—we do not know it for certain. But let us grant this: what then? how does it support the assertion that the apostles required baptism as a prerequisite to the Lord's table? We say it does not, and we prove it. Paul says not a syllable about baptism, but shows that his mind embraced nothing but faith as the qualification, and sums up what he had to say thus: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not"—*being baptized?* no, mark—"*not discerning the Lord's body.*" There is no apostolic example, then, for restricted communion, but rather apostolic example favors unrestricted communion.

4. The nature and design of the two institutions are affirmed to be authority. Their symbolical representations, of course, are here meant—and, as stated by Dr. Howell ("Terms of Communion," page 47): "Baptism being the emblem of the reception of life, and the eucharist of the food by which we are sustained, the metaphorical representation requires that baptism should always be received as a condition of communion." Strange that men, who have recourse to such weak positions, do not see themselves that their miserable shifts are powerful arguments

against their own systems! It is about the most puerile manner of going about to defend an assumed position that any zealot could be guilty of. Then J. G. Fuller (on "Communion Conversation," 3) says: "You have no more scriptural evidence that faith is an indispensable term of baptism, than we have that baptism is an indispensable term of communion." How could a man ever read the Scriptures, and state such a palpable untruth?—for Christ demands faith as a prerequisite to baptism, while the baptists admit that "the New Testament does not prohibit the unbaptized from receiving the Lord's Supper" (Kinghorn—"Baptism a Term of Communion," page 32). And this Mr. Fuller endorses, and thereby condemns his own assertion. But this is no uncommon position with these writers—in one breath they affirm, what in another they deny. One asserts one position to be the stronghold, while another demolishes it and sets up another.

The grand position of restricted communionists is, that believers' baptism is an indispensable qualification for communion at the Lord's table. Now see how they contradict themselves: "We admit that our brethren" (that is, pedobap-

tists) "are entitled to the Lord's Supper" (J. G. Fuller on "Commun. Conversation," 3.) "There is no reason why we should breathe a murmur against them because they take the Lord's Supper in their own churches" (Curtis on communion, p. 190). "On his own principles" (that is, a pedobaptist), "he is entitled to approach the Lord's table" (Howell, "Terms of Com.," p. 100). Do they not impeach themselves? Who need take much trouble in writing against a system, while its defenders so effectually beat it down?

5. Reference is made to the analogy subsisting between the Lord's Supper and the passover. Here it is adduced that, as circumcision was by Divine command an indispensable qualification in every male for a participation of the Jewish passover — so, reasoning analogically, Mr. Booth says, "Baptism is equally necessary to communion at the Lord's table." Mr. Booth may twist this matter how he pleases, and his friends too, but his position is as powerful an argument in favor of infant baptism as pedobaptists can desire. As baptism did not come in the place of circumcision, neither is there any law in the New Testament to make it requisite for baptism to be essential to eating the Lord's Supper—

though there was a law fully laid down, prohibiting any but the circumcised from eating the paschal supper. Here is another subterfuge, and it does not want much depth of discernment to see that this can be no authority for restricted communion; it flies like chaff before the wind, as each of the others have done. We now come to what may be considered the last prop.

6. We are told that the universal church is agreed that "baptism has been held in all ages and by all denominations to be a Divinely-prescribed preliminary to the Lord's Supper" (Howell, "Terms of Com.," p. 51). They are upon the old hack at last—"*Hear the church.*" The appeal here is to all denominations of pedobaptists in the world. If the church be authority in one thing, it must be in another, especially where there is uniformity of testimony: consequently, the church, apart from the baptists, witness that infant baptism is scriptural; and, upon this mode of reasoning, away goes baptist restricted communion and the doctrine of believers' baptism altogether; so that the last prop is gone, and the close communion of baptists, in both scripture and reason, "like the baseless fabric of a vision, leaves not a wreck behind!"

PART VI.

BAPTIST DENOMINATION.

SECTION I. — THE BAPTISMAL CONTROVERSY IN THE FIRST FIFTEEN CENTURIES OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA.

We think we have shown to every candid inquirer after truth, that no foundation can be established for restricted communion by any command in the word of God, or by any dependence which may possibly be founded on the idea of one positive institute being made to govern another, without a direct command for such dependent connection. We have shown, too, that restricted communion has not any justifiable pretext for defence in scripture precedent, nor have its advocates any authority for compelling any who may violate one enactment of the Saviour's to violate others. In civil, moral,

or religious law, such monstrosity was never thought of. *What!* because an individual violates one law, he must be thrust onward against his will in the violation of another! We have also shown that the immediate successors of the apostles, and those who followed them, never set up any pretence for restricted communion when first there were innovations made upon the ordinance of baptism; they were unquestionably involved in similar disputes to those which the controversy now assumes, restricted communion excepted.

We may say that in the foregoing parts of this work it has been clearly demonstrated that restricted communionism is untenable if viewed in relation to the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the institution of baptism, the design of the two ordinances, the commands of Christ, and the practices of the apostles and disciples of the Lord Jesus. We conceive that we have not left it any ground to stand upon, but in the dogma of partisan discipleship.

Seeing, then, that this rule in the baptist denomination, held with such tenacity and confidence, has evidently no scriptural authority for its introduction, by Christ or his first disciples,

we are compelled to turn our attention from inspired to uninspired ecclesiastical history. We look at the records of the church in the first two or three centuries of the Christian dispensation: there we find no division with the members of the body of Christ when observing the Lord's Supper, on the ground of baptism, nor any distinct society setting up a right to exclude others from the table because the apostolic mode of baptism was not adhered to.

Some may suppose that there was no departure in these early times from what is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, bearing upon baptism; but we have clearly shown, from ecclesiastical records, that there was. Not a few questions were agitated, but not a syllable do we find advanced about any dissension upon communion at the Lord's table.

In passing on from the first two or three centuries of the Christian dispensation, we discover the innovations upon the mode of professedly administering the ordinance of baptism had become general, and pouring and sprinkling were by no means uncommon. But not to pause at these examples, where the separation would doubtless have taken place had there been scrip-

tural grounds for it, we find that when the innovation had acquired an extensive practice, and the agitation still remained unabated, while the universal adoption of man's invention was urged with considerable vigor, in relation to both the mode of administration and the subjects for the ordinance—even at this juncture, there was nothing mooted about division of the church at the Lord's table.

None were adventurous enough to declare themselves justified in separating and setting themselves up to claim exclusive authority over the table of the Lord, or to shut out any believer who was a member of a visible church, upon the ground of the controversy. We see, then, that through the fourth century, innovations upon the ordinance of baptism were made, multiplied, and perpetuated, without at all disturbing the fellowship of the church, in breaking bread to commemorate the Lord's death till he come.

In the fifth century, the question of baptism was brought before different councils, whose decisions were given in favor of infant baptism. The opposite opinions were therefore anathematized, and those who held them incurred the

penalties attached to heresy. The baptismal controversy is alluded to in the writings of several of the fathers, some of whom did not scruple, in spite of edicts and decrees, to condemn the practice of baptizing infants, as a deviation from scripture, and the early custom of the church.

The same view of the subject was very prevalent in the eastern provinces of the Roman empire. Disaffection, because of baptismal and other innovations, became so popular, that in the ninth century that powerful schism arose which led to the formation of the Greek church. This was one of the articles in which an irreconcilable difference of opinion prevailed between the new communion and the old — the latter adhering to its established custom of sprinkling infants, while the former baptized them by three immersions.

The schism which had occasioned such a defection from the church of Rome, did not remove the cause of controversy concerning baptism, but, on the contrary, increased it by the intolerant proceedings which were taken against those who refused to be silenced. Driven from the bosom of their own communion, they took

refuge in the churches of the Waldenses, in the valleys of Piedmont; and at a later period they joined the disaffected sects in Germany and Flanders, among whom they sowed the seeds of their own doctrines.

The zeal with which they labored to spread the opinions wherein they differed from the church of Rome, only made them a more conspicuous mark for persecution. Imprisonment, exile, or death, was the fate of those who persisted in their adherence to this so-called heresy. All the terrors of the church were invoked to extinguish the offensive tenet; but so rapid was its growth under persecution, that the number of those who professed it in the beginning of the twelfth century is said by Mosheim to have amounted to eight hundred thousand.

From this time to the commencement of the Reformation, Germany was the chief seat of the baptist reformers, whence, following the course of the Rhine, they spread over Holland. Being thus scattered over that part of the continent of Europe in which the doctrines of the Reformation were agitated, they availed themselves of the opportunity of gaining attention to their own views.

From this great epoch in the history of religious opinions may be dated a new era in the history of baptism. Up to this time the doctrine, though so tenaciously maintained through sufferings, persecution, and death, does not appear to have bestowed any particular designation upon those who held it, nor did they advocate the restricting of themselves to their own party in the communion of the Lord's Supper.

SECTION II. — THE ORIGIN OF THE DENOMINATION.

The rise of a society is a consideration of some importance in its onward progress and pretensions. So in reference to the history of the Baptist Denomination; and it may be a matter to be somewhat regretted that there are circumstances connected with the origin of the body, as a distinct ecclesiastical denomination, that occasion grief.

We can not turn to the first movements of baptists, in acquiring a religious distinction among Christians, without agitating events of a revolting character. They display a cast of moral deformity which leads us almost to shudder to remove the covering which time has cast

over it: but history has chronicled it, and we can not revert to the commencement of the denomination and pass the events by unnoticed. The cause of truth demands us to say something relating to these facts, as identified not only with the origin of the denomination, but of the particular features of restricted communion.

We will endeavor to use a sparing hand, and in this review scan the circumstances as briefly as we can, without penetrating to exhibit the enormities of the moral delinquents who first moved on the continent of Europe for distinction as baptists, and which marks the epoch of the commencement of the history of baptists, and as a denomination which led on to the idea of restricted communion.

In directing attention to ecclesiastical history, it will be seen that in the agitation created by Martin Luther, when he brought about the Reformation, there was a movement on the part of some, who embraced and cherished the baptist views.

The leading men of this movement were Munzer, Stubner, and Storck. They had been disciples of Luther, and began to preach in their new character as baptists in the town of Wit-

tenberg, in Saxony, in the year 1521. Their followers, composed almost exclusively of the lowest rabble, in 1525 rose in a general rebellion against the established authorities throughout that province, Suabia, Thuringia, and Franconia. We must here bear in mind that the insurrection was partly of a political character, occasioned by the oppression to which the peasantry were subjected. They were soon defeated, and Munzer himself was taken and put to death.

In 1532, fresh disturbances arose. A numerous mob of these professed disciples, conducted by John Matthias, a baker of Haerlem, and John Boccoldt, a tailor of Leyden, suddenly attacked the city of Münster during the night, and made themselves masters of the place. Their adherents immediately flocked thither from all quarters. Matthias named Münster "Mount Zion," and proclaimed himself the king. Having, with only thirty followers, madly undertaken to attack and disperse the forces which came to recover the town, he perished, with all who accompanied him. John of Leyden then assumed the royal dignity, and under his conduct the multitude is said to have proceeded to wilder excesses. The city was, however, recaptured

by the army which the bishop had brought up against it, on June 24, 1535; and Boccoldt, falling into the hands of the victors, was soon after executed, with the most terrific cruelties which hatred and revenge could dictate.

Most extravagant tenets and conduct have been ascribed to the baptists of Münster; and, though the accounts of a proscribed sect by their enemies only ought to be unquestionably substantiated, yet there is enough in their history, well accredited, to fill us with loathing disgust: though we would hope and cherish the belief that there were some sincere Christians who had no part or lot with the wicked multitude, but history classes all together.

In briefly noticing some of the principles with which they were justly charged, may be named that of their holding the unwarrantableness of all civil government, the emancipation of the faithful from subjection to either laws or taxes, and that among the saints all things ought to be common. They maintained that God made his will known to them individually by special inspirations; and are said to have expressed themselves with some degree of indifference, almost amounting to contempt or disparagement,

of the written word. Besides the internal impressions, which they called inspirations, they had dreams and visions in which they put much confidence. Some of them conceived themselves to have the prophetic gift, which they were specially accustomed to exercise in predicting the speedy approach of the end of the world.

The light in which baptists have generally regarded the feelings of Luther toward these desperadoes, and the baptists in general, because that great and godly man denounced such baptists, has often been a matter of surprise. The enemies of Luther among the papists would take occasion to bring the sins and rebellion of this party upon him, and attach their proceedings to what they called "the detestable Lutheran heresy." Luther was but a man of like passions with ourselves; and, in review of all the circumstances, his patience and forbearance toward such a set might more reasonably fill us with surprise. That he did denounce them, and proclaim their death, may be deplored in these days, but is not to be wondered at when regarding the practices and circumstances of the times.

These men of the sixteenth century were the first movers toward restricted communion. Bap-

tism did not affect the relation of Christians in their communion at the Lord's table before this time. Compulsion and not choice, we should conclude, first brought it about; it is never referred to as the result of enlightened conviction upon the subject, nor as a willing, voluntary act, under any honorable impression. No, the position was from necessity, because of the ill-odor of the sect, occasioned by the sinful and detestable moral practices of some.

From these men emanated the onward course for the denomination and restricted communion. Those who were baptists were shunned, and none could commune with them. Prejudice ranked the worthy with the most vile; and, as those Münster baptists were like Ishmaelites indeed, with hand against every man, every man's hand was against them. With the opprobrious epithet of *anabaptists*, all were cast together, and all suffered the same reproach.

By watching this progress, we see something of the grounds of restricted communion. On account of those fanatics to whom we have just referred, the baptists on the continent of Europe were destined to additional persecution. For a long time it was dangerous, particularly in

Germany, to profess an adherence to the doctrine of adult baptism—all those who held that tenet being most absurdly classed as belonging to the sect of the Münster anabaptists, as they were called, but who in reality had no connection with those wicked insurgents. Of these were the *Mennonites*, so called from Menno Simonis. They always disclaimed any fraternity with the baptists of Münster. They now form a numerous body in Holland, and are found in various parts of Germany and Prussia. Others were called *Waterlandians*, from the place of their principal church; and others *baptists*, &c.

In these brief references to some of the circumstances giving rise to the history of the baptist denomination and restricted communion, we can not attach much importance, either to the purity of spirit, or desire for the glory of God, in the men who first moved for the object; and we can see pretty clearly that, however the baptists' sentiment may commend itself to us, and however strenuously we may advocate the duty of Christians to regard the ordinance of baptism as instituted by Christ and practised by the apostles, there is nothing in the consideration of assuming authority over the table of

the Lord, but what may lead us to connect it with the spirit of ignorant bigotry or antichristian usurpation.

SECTION III. — BAPTIST DENOMINATION IN GREAT BRITAIN.

In turning from the consideration of the movement of the baptists on the continent of Europe, to the position they assumed in England, &c., we observe that little is known of them there before the sixteenth century. Their name then appears among the various sects who were struggling for civil and religious freedom, but suffering from the augmented disadvantage of being classed with the continental insurgents and fanatics.

The general name by which the baptists were distinguished in England was the same as that given to the Münster rioters. *Anabaptist* was a name of opprobrium, and the people shunned the sect as a moral and religious pestilence. The name *anabaptist* is to the present day used by some opponents of the baptists in denominational disputes and controversial writings, with the intention of treating with contempt the *bap-*

tists; though generally none who can sustain a reputation for honorable Christians would condescend to the use of the term, it being almost universally admitted to be a vulgar and unjustifiable reflection.

The application of the name *anabaptist* is unwarranted when applied to the baptists, and they have always protested against it, not only because it was given to those first scandalous movers who led to the distinct denomination of baptists, but because they do not practise or sanction *a new or second baptism.* The baptists have from the earliest period maintained that there is no validity in what is designated "infant baptism." Two successive baptisms therefore have never been countenanced nor thought of by the baptists. Adult believers are required to be baptized by the baptists upon the ground that, whatsoever was practised upon them in infancy, was no baptism at all.

The features of our belief as baptists with respect to that ordinance is, that baptism commenced with the Christian dispensation, and was peculiar to it, bearing no analogy to circumcision, nor in any sense derived from previous enactments, but revealed as a positive law of

the kingdom of Christ; that baptism is only scriptural as administered by submerging the whole body of the baptized in water; that it can not be scripturally administered to any but on a profession of faith in Christ Jesus; that, as a command of the New Testament, it is obligatory on all who profess faith in Christ; and that, holding such as conscientious views of what Christ requires in the ordinance of baptism, it is so far right to discountenance every substitute, and deny it the right to the title of Christian baptism at all. Such views are proof that there could be no just cause for designating these "anabaptists."

It would have been in the present day unnecessary at all to have referred to any elucidation of this circumstance, but that it seems requisite to show that, with the whole body of baptists in England, as well as on the continent of Europe, in the distinctive feature of their springing into a denominational sect, restricted communion was entirely accidental, and not regarded by them at the time as essential to the duties they owed to Christ and his institutions.

In the sixteenth century, the opinions of the baptists were sufficiently popular in England to

attract the notice of the national establishment, as is evident from the fact that, at a convocation held in 1536, they were denounced as "detestable heresies, utterly to be condemned." Proclamations followed, to banish the baptists from the kingdom; their books were burnt, and several individuals suffered at the stake. The last person who was burnt in England for his religious opinions was a baptist, of the name of Edward Wightman; he was not, however, burnt as a baptist, but upon the charge of blasphemy and heresy.

The first baptist congregation in England that we know of, is reported to have been formed by Mr. Smyth, a clergyman of the church of England, who, having embraced the baptist view, resigned his living, and opened a place for public worship on the principles of the baptists, in London, in 1607. This step encouraged others to follow his example, who had hitherto concealed or privately professed their opinions. The baptists, who were mingled with the *independents*, separated from them about the year 1638, and set up for themselves. They sent over one of their number to be immersed by one of the Dutch baptists of Amsterdam, that he might be

qualified to baptize his friends in England after the same manner.

The forms of worship in the general adopted by these congregations that sprang up in various parts of England and Wales, did not materially vary from the practice of the *puritans*. The reformed churches on the continent of Europe furnished a model for all the sects in England which then contended for the rights of nonconformity, and are generally spoken of under the name of the "Three Denominations of Protestant Dissenters." Among these the baptists were not the least distinguished for the consistency of their conduct in maintaining the right of private judgment, and in advocating the principles of universal toleration in matters pertaining to religion. But their baptist views (though at this time many of them did not favor restricted communion) were a barrier to their close affinity to the other denominations.

The baptists, with other nonconformists, had to struggle on through a series of oppressive evils; persecution, banishment, imprisonment, and death, were visited upon many for their religious views. Soon after the Reformation, for about one and a half centuries, except during

the brief space of the commonwealth, they continued to be persecuted by a succession of restrictive and penal laws of almost constantly-increasing severity. From the suspension of these cruel assaults upon dissenting denominations, it has taken more than another century to raise them from being merely tolerated bodies to a free participation in the rights of their fellow-subjects, in which no steps were taken till toward the close of that period.

Here it will be seen that the various sects of religionists had no space for civil, religious, or mental growth. They were driven into corners; and when we reflect upon the particular views of the baptists—that they were shut out from the sympathies even of some other proscribed denominational sects—it could not be otherwise than that they should fraternize upon the basis of their own particular sentiments, so that nearly the whole of the baptist societies in England became restricted communionists: though there were always some who would not imbibe this principle, and among these stood the far-famed Roger Williams, whose principles, expounded by both his life and writings in England and America, claimed for all men perfect

liberty of sentiment and conscience in reference to religious views. His political principles were ever of that liberal cast which but few in those days could appreciate, so that he suffered for them in his fatherland, and, what is yet more astounding, in the land where he sought a home, and from the very people too, who, alike with himself, had sought, in a far-distant continent, an asylum where conscience might be free! He could not mix with baptists, though himself a baptist, in either England or America, because in the matter of communion they bound the consciences of those who would know no master but Christ, and be his freemen. In Scotland and Ireland, the baptists never have been so numerous as in England and Wales.

We have been as brief as the circumstances would possibly admit, in this review of the baptist denomination, in its distinctive form, and in its relation to restrictive communion. Nearly a millenary and a half of years passed over in the history of the Christian dispensation, and nothing was heard of the denominational distinction of baptists, nor of refusal to meet other Christians at the table of the Lord, upon the grounds of their difference of opinion in the

baptismal controversies, though the disputes commenced early in the history of the Christian church, and have continued onward to the present time.

In the sixteenth century, the agitation for reformation on the continent of Europe, by some mysterious (that is, to us mysterious) coincidents, gave birth to this distinctive feature in the religious world, of the *baptist denomination*. We can not, as we have seen, look back upon the first movers with any feelings of complacency, though that fact does not militate against baptists being a distinct body, giving force to their conscientious impressions, and maintaining strict adherence to the form of administering one of those positive institutions of the Christian dispensation which Christ has left to be observed and practised.

We have seen that, with this movement, followed restrictive communion. There being distinct baptist churches for fellowship and worship, they were not any longer dependent upon any other society of Christians for the services of public worship. They adopted exclusion, and became isolated as churches from all other Christians; though we can not say this was by choice

in such societies as the Münster baptists, for what sincere Christians would have had fellowship with such disgraceful societies? If *they* boasted of restricted communion, it must have been upon the principle of making a virtue of necessity. But as no such extravagant follies and sins are chargeable upon the baptists of Great Britain, we may suppose that for denominational purposes, and as we learn also by the suggestion of the independents, they did, about the year 1638, become distinct baptist churches, embracing mostly the principles of close communion.

SECTION IV. — CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH OPERATED TO MAKE CLOSE COMMUNION A CHERISHED PRINCIPLE.

The baptists discontinuing to be mixed with other Christian bodies, and communing no longer at the table of the Lord with other devoted Christians, were moulded into a habit of exclusiveness.

We have seen from the first that close communion did not arise from the conviction that mixed communion with other devoted followers of Christ would be in opposition to the will of

Christ, or that there was anything in the spirit of the New Testament or in the conduct of the first disciples of Christ to warrant it. The circumstances of the times, together with the conviction that they were right in their views of the Christian ordinance of baptism, consummated this plan undoubtedly.

The first hundred and fifty years which passed over their history was attended with such a succession of trials and sufferings, in common with other nonconformists, that they had enough to do to look for their escape from calamities which beset them on every hand. They were, of course, as one of the consequences of persecution, more cemented together in the fraternal bonds of Christian fellowship, and their restrictive-communion principles became part and parcel of their religious belief.

As they might be said to suffer the loss of all things for Christ's sake, so they were mostly poor and kept low. As to civil liberty, they had none. It was enough, in the estimation of their persecutors, that they should live only by sufferance; and thus they, with other nonconformists, had an affinity to the apostle, when he thus describes the state of himself and his

companions in Christ: "For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake." And again: "For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." And again, speaking of his loss, and love of Christ, he says, "For whom I have suffered the loss of all things." As one of the important means of worldly influence is wealth, they being poor, their voice, of course, was not heard. All their consolation sprang from an approving conscience within. The peace and smiles of their Lord resting upon them, would be calculated to lead them to suppose that everything they observed distinguished them as followers of Jesus, and that all their prejudices in favor of their own practices indicated that they were such as God approved.

The baptists were less educated than other religious communities. They had no facilities for mental culture, and it was mostly the illiterate who joined their societies. Their deficiency in literature, or their ignorance of the simple rudiments of an education, could be no sin or ground of reproach; but who can say that it was not a disadvantage, and calculated to obstruct the workings of their mental powers, as

to both their cherished prejudices against literary refinement and religious liberal sentiments? Who has ever found otherwise, but that ignorance and obstinate bigotry bear an almost inseparable alliance the one to the other? Roger Williams, as a man of education, felt this among the baptists; and while his noble soul expanded for full liberty, though a baptist, he could find but little fellowship in their association.

The narrowing down of creeds, and the drawing into smaller circles the line of charity, fraternity, and liberality, is the certain result of stunted mental growth. They are the unalterable evils, under such circumstances, that have to be borne with, and it becomes us to commiserate the individuals who are the subjects of them, rather than despise and treat them with contempt—believing that we should have displayed precisely the same objectionable traits of character, had not more fortuitous circumstances fallen to our lot than it was their privilege to enjoy.

See the application of these remarks to the views of restricted communion among baptists, in the notable period of the sixteenth century. Regard the circumstances of the times when

baptists first presented themselves as a distinct body of religious worshippers in Christendom, and that which followed to force them as it were to cherish exclusive communion, and we shall find the solution of all that may be necessary to illustrate how close communion could be established, and grasped, and retained even long after the circumstances which favored the fostering of it had passed away. The tolerant spirit of open communion, advocated as it has been by those eloquent defenders of liberty, Robert Robinson and Robert Hall, soon cleared the mist of superstitious bigotry from the minds of the most learned of the English baptists, and has been progressing in that happy direction through the whole denomination.

The mind does not become momentarily contracted; it is not so sensitive as to fall instantaneously under the blighting effects of ignorance and superstition, nor does it in a moment expand in all the richness of fertile exuberance as soon as favorable circumstances arise to foster and cherish expansion. Modern ecclesiastical history, therefore, unfolds to us that long-cherished habits and religious prejudices demand a work of time for correction and improvement.

The favorable circumstances for advancement and acquiring knowledge, in this age, we trust will operate effectually in entirely eradicating from the baptist denomination their narrow notions of communion, which have no foundation in the word of God, and which are so antagonistical to Christian charity.

SECT. V. — THE BAPTIST DENOMINATION NOT WITHOUT SOME MEN OF PROFOUND KNOWLEDGE.

It may be suggested by some that, in the foregoing section, an apparent injustice has been done in referring to the earlier days of the denomination, implying that they were without men of literary attainments, and in not saying that during that long period there were in the baptist denomination some men of profound acquirements, who might have done honor to any sect of Christians.

It is certainly true that there were some enlightened and literary characters; but when we speak of a class of people, or of a community, we speak of them as appearing in the mass, always allowing that there may be exceptions; and we are glad to have them to speak of in the

baptist denomination, though they were but few indeed, so that a child might write them. There were, notwithstanding, doubtless many names, lost to successive generations, of worthy and enlightened baptists, of whom it might be said "the world was not worthy." But the circumstances of their times forbade their coming forth. If, as was the case with Roger Williams, they had declared their liberal feelings, there were none to respond among other denominations, because their views on baptism condemned them, so that they were destined to fall back into their little party circle, and suffer on till their noble and emancipated spirits expanded in the pure and liberal assembly of heaven.

In later days, we do not lose sight of such men as Dr. John Gill and Abraham Booth, as erudite and godly, who were strong advocates of restricted communion, and venturing, too, to base it upon "thus saith the Lord." But their strong love of party led them to display their weakness. We must ever look upon all men — the best of men, the profoundest reasoners, and the soundest theologians — as coming in some respects under the influence of natural disposition. Their weak point will show itself some-

where, and, did we not carefully bear this in mind, the religious world would be more paradoxical to us than it is already, and surely that need not be! John Gill, the champion of doctrinal truth and restricted communion, was naturally of a dogmatical construction of mind. It suited his natural temperament to be rigid and exclusive; a great and godly man, but not less a lover of party, and the leader of a sect; conscience, however, would not let him be this, did he not consider the position to be according to the will of God. But the mind, from natural constitution, might be wooed to this conclusion, and by a plausible process of reasoning, where the premises were false, though so good and great a man, he erred. No one can read what he has written without discovering the positive way in which he advances his sentiments; and there is not a child acquainted with the Scriptures but what would be able to combat his views upon the church, baptism, Lord's Supper, &c. He makes strong assertions, but adduces no proof in support. He often sets down his views as though he were stating what Christ had commanded, when he has no foundation whatever in the Scriptures.

So with Abraham Booth. He is viewed by the advocates of restricted communion as the unanswerable defender of their faith and practice. All who have since him written upon the subject have taken his ideas, and, when they have departed, it has been most evidently to expose the weakness of their position. But what candid individual, who reflects when reading Abraham Booth's "Apology for the Baptists," does not discover the fabric of the mind that could dictate such a production? His assertions of the undeniable truth of his positions are strong just in proportion as they are defenceless, and he starts upon premises utterly devoid of foundation in truth. He, too, puts himself forward, as is justly observed by Robert Hall, as the champion in the cause of the baptists, as if there were unanimity of sentiment upon the one point he proposes to sustain and defend: he calls it an "Apology for the Baptists," and yet the whole production is against baptists who differ in their views from him. Is not such a display of the mind of Abraham Booth enough to show how inadequate he was to such a task, when we consider the bias his mind could take of the circumstances of the baptists, in the title

of his book? The venerable Booth was a godly man—a star of no small magnitude, shining with the grace of his Lord in his day on earth—but his "Apology for the Baptists" is the weakness of the man.

Having noticed the above men on the side of restricted communion, we must not forget on the other side one or two liberal souls as great and good as have already been referred to. Who can treat with indifference the production of the famous JOHN BUNYAN—as much a baptist as a Gill or a Booth, but breathing the spirit of his Lord and Master in favor of open communion? We must do his memory honor in this noble liberality of his soul, as much as for the singular and inimitable production of his "Pilgrim's Progress," known and regarded the wide civilized world through. Roger Williams, to whom we have before referred, renowned in the history of liberty, civil and religious, in both England and America, where he took a noble part in struggles worthy of his bold and liberal soul. Then the celebrated ROBERT HALL, with giant mind, profound acquirements, and unrivalled oratory, laid hold of the horns of restricted communion, and shook the *monster* to a com-

plete shadow! Next among many others that we think of is the great Alexander Carson, the man that was admitted by all master-minds to be in advance of his age: he saw so far into the truthfulness of unrestricted communion as to declare it a self-evident principle, and saw about as much authority in the Scriptures for restricted communion among the baptist denomination as the papists did for the doctrine of transubstantiation; and it may be judged (for it is in print), from the way in which he handled that fallacy, that he would have strangled restricted communion (had he come out upon it fully) as he would a lizard from a bog upon which he might set his foot. Had his life been spared, he purposed giving to the world his views of that system, which he utterly denounced, as without authority in the word of God. But there are those who possess his views upon the subject, given from his own lips: they tell us that possibly they shall some day give them forth in a printed form—and this is no more than the religious community will expect from them. Their testimony is, that had the doctor written his own sentiments, the baptist denomination must have stood amazed at the absurdity

of the position they had all along been striving to defend.

We have now noticed the circumstances of the times connected with the history of the "Baptist Denomination" in Europe, and a few of the men who have taken sides in its internal dissensions. We must now pass on to other phases of its appearance.

SECTION VI. — AMERICAN BAPTISTS.

It is but a running glance of necessity that we have taken of the rise and progress of European baptists, and the particular feature of the tenet of close communion, catching more definitely a few prominent objects which fell in our way. It will be for those interested in the subject, seeking more information, to peruse ecclesiastical history. We have now to look at the aspect of the baptist denomination on the continent of America, but more especially of the United States.

The New World, having been comparatively but lately discovered, has necessarily been mainly peopled by emigrants and their posterity from the civilized world, within the period of the

Reformatian. That which transpired in the Old World, with all the factions, political and religious, they participated in till they could endure them no longer. The principal settlers in the states having been thus embroiled in the commotions of European troubles, the feelings they cherished there were constitutionally the same in their transplanted condition. The new country which they inhabited afforded opportunity for expansion of feeling and mind, because not so obstructed on every hand by laws and sentiments inimical to those which they had embraced under altogether unfavorable auspices. The baptists, who were persecuted and fled from their fatherland to America, had been mostly fostered under the restrictive principle of close communion, the features of which we have seen, and the results of which are manifest to the present day.

Whatever condemnatory feelings may have been cherished in relation to laws and government in their native homes, the feelings to their religious associations were of a different character. They may have looked upon civil and political institutions which had brought upon them losses, sorrow, and separation from relatives and

native soil, with abhorrence and hatred; but their religious predilections were cherished and doubly dear to their hearts; they suffered mainly for them, and valued them still more dearly from a review of all that had been experienced. We, therefore, might expect that the baptists, in their particular views and restrictive tenet, would be more rigid than even their brethren who never had such associations as expatriation was calculated to foster: and so it is.

The baptists who forsook the continent of Europe, and Great Britain and Ireland, were mostly poor, from what they had suffered at home. They were also illiterate in the general, and with but few exceptions they had their prejudices doubly bound around them, as principles which they believed to be truth and godliness.

As the result of mental reflection, however, they, as well as the European baptists, soon began to turn from the considerations which had driven them to the practice of restricted communion, to the more legitimate grounds upon which all practice should be regulated. Their notions were that their practice was right, scriptural, and approved by God; but a stronger defence for such a line of conduct became neces-

sary, and nothing could be more desirable than an established belief, that the practice adopted was and had been the practice of those who had observed the primitive order and institutions of the gospel from the days of Christ down to the present time. Nothing could be easier than what remained to be done, in order to cherish this notion and make the whole appear admirably consistent and uniform. The following mode of reasoning was necessarily the one pursued with such minds:—

'Disciples were baptized by command of Jesus, then added to the church, and came to the table of the Lord. Here is the order observed —none in the church but baptized believers— the Lord's Supper a church ordinance: therefore exclusive communion is scriptural.' These limited views were then brought to the New Testament, not to be tested by all its bearings, or to see the truthfulness of the reasoning as well as the legitimate character of the conclusions, but to make the word confirm what was the undoubted belief previously entertained.

It is easy to see how by such a process the mind might become confirmed in prepossessed opinions, and the word of God be made the in-

strument of fixing the mind in opinions contrary to its spirit, and directly erroneous. If we want the mind and will of God to be manifest to us at any expense, we must forsake denominational bulwarks, be regardless of name or party, lay aside prepossessed notions, and inquire at the oracle of the New Testament in a teachable spirit. If Messrs. Gill, Booth, and others, had done this when becoming the advocates for restricted communion, they never would have so deceived themselves as to have untremblingly affirmed that close communion was the law of God's house; that it was the command of Christ, and a violation of the will of Christ not to observe it; with many other such bold assertions. If we ask for the letter of the enactment to see that it is law, or anything approaching to it, they are dumb, or equivocating, or forsake their point for inference or example. It is a mere display of words, but becomes highly sinful to declare that it is "thus saith the Lord," when he has never spoken nor implied it. We can unhesitatingly declare that, when they say, 'It is the law of Christ,' that it is not, and that there is no more a positive law to favor restricted communion than there is positive law for the wor-

ship of the host, or for clerical exclusiveness, which the papists observe.

But why are American churches bound in such a spell? Surely the passing away of two or three generations ought to have wrought deliverance in the minds of a people glorying in freedom, and who profess to think and act for themselves. Though their forefathers were twice bound to the religious narrowness they contracted under the mighty load they sustained in Europe, and though their immediate successors may have imbibed the same spirit from them, surely the days ought now to have arrived for emancipation. Seeing that about eight generations have passed, surely such prejudices, such narrow conceptions and unwarrantable dogmas, should have waxed old, and vanished away.

SECTION VII. — BAPTISTS OF THE UNITED STATES UNDER A YOKE.

So it is, that where civilization, learning, and commercial enterprise, flourish — where freedom is esteemed the dignity of the man, and where felicity arises from "the lines having fallen in pleasant places" — there the baptist is in many

respects the veriest slave to religious opinions, which he must sustain though he may hate. He is not legally bound, but he is ecclesiastically bound.

Is prejudice for ever to be in the gates of the citadel? is the mind to be pent up by it in unenlightened bigotry? Are the fetters never to be made to yield, but to be regarded as the ornaments of religion? Is there ever to be that ecclesiastical asthmatical difficulty in breathing, though the soul longs for expansion? Is the dreadful ban of clerical and church discipline, and the fearful sword of excommunication, to haunt the soul, as in night-visions, when the thought would seem to demand the consideration, 'Is restricted communion according to the will of God and of Christ, whose I am and whom I serve? is it in accordance with the spirit of his liberal and lovely dispensation?'

We can suppose that, in the minds of the timid inquirers about the will of Jesus in this matter, a sort of soliloquy: 'I love them that love Thee, but wherein do I manifest it if I am as a disjointed member from the body, or violently sever others from me, at that table where all the followers of Christ are invited to come

free from any condition but that of faith in him, where all are cemented into one body, and where by spiritual communion with Christ all the joints of every denominational feature are brought visibly into one body, "fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love." Surely I am a miserable partisan in my restricted views. I would fain cherish the thought to receive all whom Christ receives, but such thought must be nipped in the bud!

'I wonder if it can be that there will be two, or five, or fifty companies in heaven of different denominations? Will baptists in the world to come exclude from their worshipping assembly the unbaptized, for multitudes go to heaven that have never submitted to the ordinance as we regard it—therefore they must be for ever as the unbaptized? if not fit for the fellowship of the church on earth, how can they be for that in heaven? But the word of God assures us that there is but one communion of saints in heaven, so that they can not be separated there. Is it right, then, to divide ourselves in this world

from those to whom we shall be eternally united hereafter? Is it for the baptist denomination that Christ prayed "that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me"? No—surely that prayer regards all disciples. Well, I am grieved in soul that I must not, as a baptist, be one at the Lord's table with an immensely large majority of those who are my brethren and sisters in Christ; sorry I am that my pure desires for union with all that love Jesus must be coerced to party manifestations, and make schism in the body of Christ. But, my thoughts, you must be suppressed; you make me unhappy. To cherish you may lead me to inquiry of others in this matter; and then I may have, under the rigorous sentence of excommunication, to wander an outcast upon the face of the earth!'

A considerable number of baptists, under the oppression of restrictive communion, so reflect and so converse in their own thoughts. They detest from their very souls the restraint laid upon the best and purest desires of their heaven-born minds; they groan under the yoke, from which they can not see a way of deliverance

without being the objects of such discipline as may deprive them of a religious character in society; they have been so overawed, that moral courage has forsaken them, and they are slaves in mind to a system as unlike the pure spirit of the Christian dispensation in that particular as hell is unlike heaven.

Ye, who love pure freedom in all things, and abominate the system of restricted communion, come forth, and show yourselves to be true men; cast off the yoke, and leave it for those who love and cherish it, to enjoy it, if they can, but do you enjoy that liberty which Christ has given you.

American baptists, your fraternity are free but in that one thing which gives liberty to freedom—the right of judgment in matters of religion. You are great but in that one thing which gives nobleness to greatness. At least one fourth of your members have thoughts of noble birth, but they dare not speak them; they have wills to be liberal and free, but are spell-bound by warning and threats; they have consciences to justify what is Godlike, but are restrained from obeying their dictates.

Look at all other denominations—they are comparatively happy and free; they have no

fears that, for communing with other Christian companies at the table of the Lord, they shall suffer the judgment of excision from their particular society; they do not tremble and groan under heavy taskmasters. There is a mystery in it—who can unravel it? You groan, being burdened, and hitherto you have made no effort to be free. The system under which you are bound is only a vile deformity under the name of Christian.

Thus far behind all other religious bodies, you have yet to look for the morning dawn of your freedom, when you shall, in spite of threats and judgments, cherish reciprocal fellowship with all disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. But the dawn of that morning is appearing. The agitation in the minds of the whole body is great; means have been resorted to for suppressing it, and those who should cherish it are the first to take measures to destroy it. Denominational distinction, however degrading it may be to every faculty of the mind, however untenable by revelation, is to some as their skin to their flesh.

It is useless for ministers to talk about putting the padlock upon the lips of their constituency, to prevent their inquiry into the truthful-

ness of restricted communion. Some of them have lately suggested this discipline, but the time is gone by for gagging; and a searching, prayerful inquiry must follow, when the thin covering will be removed, and men will be astounded that they could so long have yielded to such a flimsy defence for restricted communion. Baptist churches in the United States are destined soon to go in advance of their brethren of liberal sentiment in England and on the continent of Europe. They must be free—and doubtless some individuals are living now who will have to say that they recollect the time when baptist churches *were* bound by restricted principles of communion.

SECTION VIII.—SUMMARY REMARKS.

We have seen that the origin of baptist denominational churches and restricted communion is comparatively of recent date, yet but few baptists know this. Many, very many, have verily thought that the baptist denomination was a succession from the apostolic churches down to this day, and that they retained the sign manual of the apostles of our Lord Jesus

Christ for all that they observed. They have not been able to think otherwise than that none but truant baptists could venture to commune with Christians of another denomination without chastisement; and if repentance did not follow, with confession never to be truant again, they must be unceremoniously dismissed from fellowship as contumacious.

But such baptists have not been informed, nor have they examined ecclesiastical history themselves to ascertain the fact that, for the first fifteen hundred years of the Christian dispensation, baptism was no ground for separating Christians at the table of the Lord.

The master-mind of the late Dr. Carson, which would never suffer him to mince matters, led him to avow that restricted communion was contrary to all scripture principle. He thus writes upon the subject, from the church at Tubbermore to the church of Christ in New York: "If that brotherly intercourse, and earnest care for each other, that subsisted among the churches in the days of the apostles, is not to be found among those who profess to follow their practice, as far as it was approved by Jesus, the causes ought to be sought out and removed.

In our opinion, the chief of those causes is not the difference of sentiment, great and greatly to be deplored as this is, but is owing to the exercise of an authority never conferred on the churches by the Lord Jesus: to refuse or exclude, for difference of sentiment, any of those who give evidence that they have been bought by the blood of Christ. . . . Notwithstanding all that we have heard in favor of this plan, we still deem it the wisdom of man. Accordingly, we have found that God has made foolish this wisdom. Long has it been tried without success; and of late, in some parts of Ireland, it has been carried so far, that *some individuals can scarcely find a second to unite with them in constant fellowship.* By permitting Satan to work them up to this frenzy, it appears to us that God has affixed his seal of disapprobation on the sentiment in its lowest degree, and to lead sober-minded Christians who have been led away by its plausibility to examine more attentively the ground of their opinion.

"We entreat you to examine this subject—recollecting that, *if it be sinful to receive any that Christ has forbidden, it is also sinful to refuse any that he has invited.* There is no

safe side in error! That Jesus will not approve of refusing fellowship to *any of his brethren*, known to be such, appears to us to have the irresistible light of self-evident truth."

But let us ask you, brethren, who are of close-communion societies, is it now that you will hear the signal to be free? is it now with you as with one of the ancient tribes, when the Lord was about to set his people free?—it is said, "For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart" (Judges 5 : 15). Surely the agitation in the whole denomination, and the serious convictions of so many in most of the churches that the present system is unscriptural, must be intimation from Heaven that it is to be tested and rejected.

It behooves you, in the maintenance of your own individual responsibility before God, in all religious matters to look the subject fairly in all its bearings, and see how the principles can possibly bear the test of rigid, faithful scrutiny. Try your principles fairly by the word of God, and the result is certain that you will cast them from you, hating the sophistry by which you had been induced to suffer such arguments to prevail over your better judgments.

But in concluding this part, as we take a candid survey of the path through which we have passed, and the position at which we have arrived, let us reflect for a moment. We see baptists in the sixteenth century at first huddled together in a denominational form, partly by ecclesiastical pressure around. If we throw aside the Münster insurgents and immoral fanatics, with their associates, we may perhaps in charity look back upon the others on the continent of Europe and in Great Britain as sincere in heart, and cherish loving feelings to their memory. The remembrance of their trials will lead to the indulgence of strong sympathies of regard. Their close communion was more an accident of the times in which they lived than Christian preference to exclusiveness.

In looking at the onward course of restricted communion, if there were nothing scripturally justifiable in its rise (as most assuredly there was not), what was there in the whole review of its aspect in past generations to court our sympathies or to sanction its indulgence? Alas! it is fraught with evils dangerous in the last degree; and while reflecting on them we may well pray, from all such, "GOOD LORD DELIVER US!"

PART VII.

FEATURES OF RESTRICTED AND FREE COMMUNION.

SECT. I. — THE BASIS UPON WHICH CLOSE AND OPEN COMMUNION RESTS WITH BAPTISTS.

RESTRICTED and FREE COMMUNION are terms of distinction among baptists, very frequently not understood by baptists themselves; and therefore require that we should make some brief allusion to them in a general manner, and then proceed to examine each under its operative influence.

We have done, for the present, with exemplifying the position of restrictive-communion baptists — proving it to be one of cherishing a tenet without any foundation in the word of God. It has been demonstrated to be perfectly antagonistical to every feature of the New Testament,

and calculated only to foster strife, contention, pride, and division; this its history lamentably displays, and it is equally manifest in every system where men usurp authority, and take upon themselves at their own suggestion the right to rule conscience, coerce to uniformity, and trample under foot for non-compliance.

Systems of men's devising have done fearful hurt to the church of Christ. Many have in the Lord's kingdom, according to his parable, taken their fellow-servants and beaten them, disregarding altogether the will of the Lord himself. Had the restricted communion baptists the opportunity to display the principle by which their system is governed, they would show themselves to be the most intolerant of all religious sects.

The reason why so little is known of the distinctive features between these two branches of the denomination is, from the conduct of those who cherish close communion toward any who differ from them. Instead of investigating the subject, it has been the uniform practice to proscribe and cry down, if possible, all who have advocated a liberal and Christian conduct in reference to the Lord's table. Never did De-

metrius more violently set to work to suppress the doctrine of Christianity propagated by the apostles than have close-communion baptists to prevent unrestricted-communion principles from being received or understood.

Perhaps a very large majority of the baptist constituency have yet to understand what those advocate who are esteemed almost as heretics when they avow their adhesion to open communion. It is a common thing to hear them charged with being in error upon a most essential doctrine of the Christian faith. Of course, they who make the charge have imbibed the impression from teachers who have uttered their serious dread of such notions, and have even given the worst of names to those who have espoused more Christlike feelings toward the church of Christ than they have entertained.

Now, in the very face of things, such a line of proceeding evidently implies to every mind of sound reason that there must be something fundamentally wrong in a system where its advocates have recourse to such stratagems to frighten people, that they may fall back, the dupes and prey of designing partisans. It is because of these unmanly proceedings, that it

is necessary to make plain and set forth in the most simple manner the ground of difference existing in these two systems.

It is known to all baptists that restricted communion means the refusing to go to the table of the Lord with any believer, godly as he may be, who is not a member of a baptist church of the same faith and order. It is a principle which gives no such privilege to any child of God, unless he has observed the ordinance of believers' baptism by immersion; and though a member of a church in another denomination, it considers him unworthy of a place at the same table with a baptist. It used to be declared that no denomination except the baptist had a right to commemorate the Lord's death by breaking bread — that is, eating his supper; but this was seen to assume so much, that every enlightened mind was soon disposed to reject it, but the principle embraces the sentiment still. There is manifest inconsistency in saying what they do now — that is, that those who are esteemed by the baptists unbaptized "*are fully justified in observing the ordinance of the Lord's Supper among themselves*," while they declare their unfitness to do so in their assembly. If eligible

to the observance of the religious rite at all, they must be so everywhere, and in every Christian society.

Another feature of restricted communion is, the authority which it claims over the liberty of its adherents. No member is allowed, under *any* circumstance, to commune with any other church but such as is of the same faith and order. To do so is to be open to the censure of the church, when a confession of the act as a grievous offence before God must be made, and a promise not to be similarly guilty again is extorted, or probably excommunication may be the penalty.

But that which is shut up in mystery is the true principle of open communion: some have said one thing and some another, and the most part have thought dreadful things, yet really known nothing. It is enough for many to hear that an individual is an open-communion baptist, and they at once conceive him to be some frightful monster! It has been not a little amusing sometimes to observe with what caution and alarm the question has been put, "*What is open communion?*" and this, too, by some ministers, who are in the habit of warning the peo-

ple against the error, as they call it: so little do they know what is embraced in the term "open communion."

The first thing in disabusing the mind is, to affirm that it has no affinity to a doctrinal error, even were it an error at all. There may be some difficulty in convincing the mind of this, so strongly has the idea been cherished; but when you come to explain the nature of a doctrinal error — show that open communion, in its most aggravated aspect, if unscriptural, could only be regarded as a misconception of the use or bearing of a symbolical ordinance upon Christian conduct and practice — and that, if any error is committed, it is only in extending the privilege of the celebration of an ordinance to Christians beyond the boundary, that restricted baptists judge to be consistent — this proved, the prejudice and dread are somewhat abated, and there is a calmer hearing given to what further needs explanation.

The next thing is — admitting, for argument's sake, that it is an error to extend the privileges of observing a Christian ordinance to pedobaptists — to show that it is not done to any who are wilfully neglecting the command of Christ

to be baptized, but upon the strong conviction in their minds that they have, in a manner fully answering the ends of Christ's command, been baptized. They differ with us baptists upon the ground that our view of administering the ordinance is not of necessity—that is, not the only one to render it valid and duly observed. They are not, then, treating any command of Christ with open and wilful contempt. This is sufficient to prove that there is not that dreadful enormity in fellowship with them as had been imagined.

First, then, open communion is not a doctrinal error; and next, it is no error in practice so far as countenancing a wilful violation of any Christian duty. From this position we can, in our turn, assume the character of examiners—as it materially softens down prejudice, explains in some measure the true position, and shows the injustice done by restricted communionists to their brethren who depart from their circumscribed notions of communion.

The first question is, 'Which of two evils is the greater—an error concerning the grand truths of revelation necessary to be received and believed to the salvation of the soul, or an

error respecting certain observances in religious practices, no way immoral, but bearing upon extended liberality in an ordinance of worship?' Every right-thinking mind does not want a moment to decide upon this question: the answer is prompt that the first error so outweighs the second, that in comparison the latter is no error at all by the side of the former.

We then ask how it is that restricted-communion baptists can foster every shade of doctrinal error, and have no conscientious scruples against such, but commune with men holding them because baptized, and yet direct all their artillery against those who are more Christian and liberal than themselves? How is it that they are so on the alert to put a veto upon even the slightest whisper of open communion, yet never lift up their voice against fundamental doctrinal error, but suffer to pass unnoticed all kinds of error on the grave points which affect salvation, and receive and countenance in fraternal bonds those who boldly affirm them?

It is too manifest that there is no love of Christ or his gospel in this, but a determination to cherish partisanship, denominational dogmas, and subscriptions to uniformity in comparative

non-essentials, at all hazards. Alas! how like are these to the scribes and Pharisees addressed thus by our Lord in his day: "Wo unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." But further we spare these unaccountable sticklers for their uniformity in observing an ordinance, by not referring to the many righteous castigations which the Saviour in his word gives them, as possessing similar features of character to the men he addressed in his day.

SECT. II. — THE RELATION OPEN COMMUNION BEARS TO THE SO-CALLED BAPTIST CHURCHES.

It is very extensively believed that open communion exposes the views of baptists to becoming eventually suppressed by a majority of pedobaptists entering the societies of baptists and voting down believers' baptism by immersion, thus establishing infant sprinkling in its place.

Here it is evident that open communion and

open societies, which are two distinct things, are confounded. But even if churches were open, we have no such fears about the issue respecting the ordinance of baptism. Truth, sooner or later, will be sustained; and when it is left for its own defence, it will rapidly advance to its rightful elevation much more so than by any attempts on the part of man to shield and defend it by foreign and unscriptural means; truth requires a "fair field and no favor." Let baptists take off the fetters with which they have bound the ordinance, and they will soon find that it will gain ten to one converts more than they are making by all their solicitude and guardianship. In the past history of the church, where error of any kind, doctrinal or practical, has made headway, and truth been put down, the arm of human and civil power has been invoked, and it has been granted to the full. But enlightened ages now and in the future will revolt at the idea of granting such aid; therefore the conflict will be one of principle, and the less truth is weakened by the professed protection of human strength (rather weakness), the sooner will she be triumphant. We therefore feel assured that open churches would advance bap-

tists' views more than anything else; but we turn to the question, 'What is open communion?' as the point more directly under our present discussion.

Open communion does not imply open societies: they are distinct things. Open communion means no more nor less than this, that the societies bearing the name of baptist churches shall be exclusive in admitting to membership; that none shall compose such societies but what have been baptized by immersion upon confession of faith: but in coming to the table of the Lord there shall be no restriction of the kind, but members of other orthodox Christian societies (that is, such as believe in the person and work of Christ as the only way of salvation) shall be welcome, thus acknowledging that full right which Jesus has given to all who believe in his name to break bread in remembrance of him.

Close-communion baptists assume a lordship over the liberties of the consciences of their individual members; they confine their brethren to a certain limit in observing the command of Christ to break bread in remembrance of him. Under no circumstances are they allowed know-

ingly to go to the table of the Lord with a pedo-baptist nor with baptist churches practising open communion. The law of close communion is definite, though much partiality is displayed in enforcing it, as we shall presently show, and this is one of the glaring evils of the system.

It demands of all its members that they shall never obey the command of Christ in eating his supper, unless they do it with such exclusive societies. If their lot be cast where such a one is not, though all other Christian denominations may be found, who would welcome them to participate in celebrating the Lord's death, they must not comply—no, not even with an open-communion baptist church; so that conscience is bound in that one glorious feature of Christ's dispensation, *love*—and, what is worse, bound to be disobedient to Christ's command. Such a course restricted communionists demand of all their members.

On the other hand, open-communion baptists are not bound in any such way. It is considered that when absent from the company of those Christians in whose fraternal bonds, by association, they are necessarily more closely linked—that, wherever they may be placed in

the Divine providence for a time—they can fulfil their Lord's command to meet at his table with any society of Christians, none daring to make them afraid. They view the table as spread for the members of Christ's visible body; and, upon making known that they are of that body, they feel that they have no barrier, but commune there for the time being with their Saviour in his death and sufferings for them. There is liberty, in the true sense of the word, to obey Christ's commands according to the dictates of conscience, exercising love as the Scriptures unfold, with all that love our Lord Jesus Christ, and serve him in sincerity and truth.

Close-communion baptists guard the table of the Lord, by giving permission to none other to commune with them but those members in good standing with churches of the same faith and order. It is therefore regarded as exclusively an ordinance instituted for none other than believers baptized by immersion, and such as bind themselves to be exclusive in their practice.

Open-communion baptists admit, as occasional communicants, members of other denominations to the Lord's table; they do it, recognising

the entire truth of the principle that *it is the Lord's table*, that *he has instituted the ordinance*, and that *for all the visible members of his body*, the church.

Here it may be said that we have so far stated the features which give the distinctive appellations to restricted and open communion baptist societies. Surely it is not the intention of any candid Christian, though he practise restricted communion, to justify all that angry feeling and everlasting commotion which is displayed in the support of the dogma of restricted communion.

We, in our more liberal course, would follow on in a quiet, inoffensive way, like the smooth surface of a running stream, to be lost in the ocean at last; but these never-peaceful partisans, fighting with every one who will not subscribe to all they ignorantly force upon them, are full of commotions, backbitings, swellings, and tumults; in their own fellowship usurping over each other, and, like so many little, petty despots, they march abroad with the same spirit of bitter dissension, to quarrel with more peaceable society, and so perturb the harmony of all, as far as in them lieth.

Suppose a man to say, for conscience' sake toward God: 'I am a baptist, but no advocate for restricted communion. I give to others the full right to enjoy their opinions without my interference, and so I expect they will extend the same to me'? To this they pay no heed—the badge is put on him: like so many mosquitoes they come round him in his private life and public walk to teaze and annoy; they have him everlastingly their object of assault. He takes a quiet, inoffensive course; but no matter to them—they will not let him rest; they cry him down as an evil, they warn others to avoid him, and they say all manner of evil things against him, to fortify the minds of the people against the effects of the salutary truths he may utter, just as was practised before in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Open-communion baptists therefore have never appeared publicly in defence of their strong position till the time has passed for all righteous forbearance with their restless and quarrelsome neighbors of restricted notions. Then they have revealed the truth of their sentiments, and have uniformly battered the whole system of their opponents; proved it undeniably true that it is

of man, and not of God; and labored to expose as little as possible (in the defence of truth) the sophistry of their antagonists.

SECTION III. — THE POWERS THE TWO INSTITUTIONS POSSESS TO SUSTAIN THEIR GOVERNMENTS.

We have noticed a few particulars of what these two societies require of their members. They are bound to different observances in relation to all other Christians upon the face of the earth. Let us see their several powers for following up these requirements. These powers they possess, unless the regulations or requirements are the invention of fanatics: neither God nor reasonable beings ever laid down regulations which were impossible to follow.

Let it be borne in mind that we are not here pursuing a course of investigation, as if it yet remained to be proved that restricted communion was not of God nor Christ. We regard this as proved to demonstration in what has before been considered — the fallacy of the system exploded — and the principles altogether proved to be antiscriptural. We are now submitting it to other tests, to show its falsity in various lights.

As there is no positive law given by Christ making baptism a prerequisite to the Lord's table, restricted communion must be founded upon the supposition of the infallibility of their judgments who practise it, and the requirement of an entire submission to all that Christ has commanded to be observed. They act upon the first, concluding that it is impossible for them to err respecting what Christ requires, when it is clear that he has not given them law. In the second also they are perfectly at fault.

Restricted communion, established upon the ground that there must be entire submission to the commands of Christ, or there is no coming to the table of the Lord, assumes a position which, if correct, no one individual on earth could have ever had a right to have approached the Lord's table — concerning which he said at its institution, "*This do, as oft as ye do it, in remembrance of me.*"

Close communion has been by men invested with requisites for directing communion at the Lord's table which absolutely overthrow communion at that table altogether. It is therefore a system destructive of what it assumes to cherish. Baptists of close-communion sentiment are

not capable of carrying out the object of their adhesion. Mark well the process of reasoning, and the most forcible, too, as they consider, to which they constantly resort: 'Baptism is a command of Christ's, binding on all his disciples: therefore, baptism is a prerequisite to the Lord's Supper: *ergo*, the whole code of laws which Christ has given (saying, concerning them, "*If ye love me, keep my commandments*") is binding on all his disciples: therefore, all these commands observed are prerequisites to the observance of the Lord's Supper.'

This position will evidently take them by surprise, and we can suppose them exclaiming, '*No! no!*' But we say, 'What, then, is not this the legitimate ground upon which you place your authority for excluding from the table of the Lord the members of pedobaptist churches?' and they give the ready answer—'*No*, we confine it to the obedience to the requirement of baptism.'

Now just give us your authority to relax and to bind at your pleasure the commands of Christ. You all admit that Christ has given no command to exclude the unbaptized; and therefore, if it be upon the principle of obedience to a com-

mand, you can not, as we have shown before, make an exception, and take what command you please. Who can tell but in a few years you may make the washing of the disciples' feet the prerequisite? but we would rather suggest that the next change as prerequsite to communion should be the binding precept, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another."

It is evident, then, that there is no ability to sustain such a system upon any truthful basis. It proposes, under the failure of its own position, to make the laws of Christ's kingdom subserve its ends. It claims authority over the Lord's table upon the broad principle that obedience to what Christ has commanded his disciples to observe, invests with power to shut from that table those who fail in this matter. This position can admit of no exception, for all the commands of Christ must be observed.

From the circumstance of professing what is not enjoined by Christ, as a prerequisite to fellowship in "breaking of bread," they have advanced a principle going beyond whatever they conceived it to embrace, as the ground of communion, and then circumscribed it to the observance of a particular command, arrogantly

making themselves the authors of terms of communion. They then unblushingly put forth their blunders and assumptions as the institutions of Heaven! Robert Hall was perfectly correct when he said: "*They have attempted an incongruous mixture of liberal principle with a particular act of intolerance; and these, like the iron and clay in the feet of Nebuchadnezzar's image, will not mix.* Hence all that want of coherence and system in their mode of reasoning, which might be expected in a defence, not of a theory so properly as of a capricious sally of prejudice."

What claims can the principles of restricted communion have upon our consideration, when we see that they embrace more than we can fulfil? Much as we would desire to be so perfect in our obedience to all commands of Christ as that upon the broad basis of the principle of restricted communion we could go to the Lord's table and say, "*Lord, we have done all that thou hast commanded us*"—yet we see it is too high: it is like removing that table from us to heaven, while it was intended for us on earth. Then, on the other hand, how destitute are they of claims upon our attention, when men inter-

pret the meaning of the principle laid down to the observance of one command, sending at their discretion all others adrift! It becomes evidently the terms of men to communion at the Lord's table, and not the Master's requirement at all.

The principle of open communion is free from such confusion and absurdity; it enforces nothing but what the soul of man at once proves to be in accordance with the revelation of the New Testament and sound reason. There is no violence done to conscience, no arbitrary law to comply with, no violation of Christ's precepts, no petty usurpation at his table, no schism of the one true church in the act of commemorating the dying love of Christ; it makes all welcome to the Lord's table who have joined themselves to his visible church, and have not erred from the faith of Christ, and yields a perfect liberty to join in any of their assemblies to commemorate the Lord's death.

SECTION IV. — OPERATIONS OF THE TWO SYSTEMS.

Close and open communion have a claim to our consideration also in their practical influ-

ence. The more pure and righteous laws are, which are for the government of a people, the more confiding are all the legal authorities in the peaceful disposition of the community. This is equally manifest under professed religious government. To be arbitrary is to be always in fear, rendering necessary stringent enactments and perpetual watchfulness to keep in subjection.

Apply the truth of this to the body of close-communion baptists. Look at their stringent regulations — their attempts to silence inquiry for truth — their threats of excommunication for indulging any liberal sentiment toward other Christians; see the fear, the watchfulness, the want of moral courage, pervading the whole body. What does it imply, but that there is something from beneath interwoven in the system? Its very aspect gives the lie to its being from Heaven. But let us look at some of its developments.

Close communion fosters pride, uncharitable feeling, and isolation. What can be more contrary to what the gospel inculcates than these? Of course, those who favor it must conclude that they have greater knowledge to discover more

perfectly the ways of God, so that from their elevation they can look down and say: 'Your ignorance and inconsistency is a bar to your fellowship with us; you are not fit society for us when we go to the table of the Lord; stand by, we are holier than you!' We know that again and again they deny this; but what of words? —we can not think anything of what they say to the contrary, while their conduct has a confirmatory voice like a trumpet. Though doubtless they are self-deceived about the principles working in their minds, no human being possessed of common discernment can fail to mark that the system of restricted communion is one of pride, uncharitable feeling, and isolation. The lovers of the system may be blind to its tendency, but they alone are the exception—all the rest of the world besides see it.

It is a fearfully-persecuting system. Other religious bodies have in times past urged uniformity with dreadful penalties attached to non-compliance, and the restricted baptist church possesses the principles of their terror. It extends its power as far as it is permitted to hurt the saints for non-compliance to uniformity in the matter of baptism. But we have to thank

God that he has marked out a path less dangerous than that which was assigned to the mystery of iniquity, and the man of sin, for his fearful developments, and has kept the baptist denomination low in a low place in political despotic governments, or evidently there would have been no mercy shown to dissentients.

It is unrighteous to the members admitted to fellowship. It has no mercy upon parental, filial, or conjugal relationships, if they are in the way of its dogmas. Its tendency is to draw off from every social relation in life—to narrow down the best and loveliest feelings, to a little party of bigots. For instance, the parents may be righteous and God-fearing people, honorable members of a Christian church, who have walked in the ways of God blameless, so far as man can see. Their child may become religious; he is drawn by some means into the society of baptists, and sees the ordinance of believers' baptism to be scriptural. So far all may be correct, and he be commended for conscientiously yielding to believers' baptism; but he is haunted with baptism, to the exclusion of everything else, and is prevailed on to join a close-communion baptist society, and from that moment the

principles he must adopt make him a schismatic. His godly parents, who were earnest in praying for his conversion to God, are not to be fellowshipped with him at the Lord's table, and he must treat them as unworthy of a name and a place among the saints.

Husbands and wives are divided by this unholy system. If both be converted to God, and members of churches, they can not approach the Lord's table together; in the religious training of their children they are divided, and the results have often been painful in the extreme. Infidelity is more likely to take hold of a child's mind than religious feeling from these exhibitions of partisan dogmas. It is the same with sincere friends, &c.; but not to enlarge, we pass to another feature.

It is a system which unchurches a very large proportion of the denomination. It is here, as a system of religious observance, singularly suicidal. It proceeds upon the ground that none but believers baptized by immersion have a right to the Lord's table, at least in the churches of the baptist denomination. It makes baptism the prerequisite to the Lord's table and nothing else; and yet it shuts out thousands of devoted

baptists, though acknowledged to be exemplary Christians, for it rejects every open-communion baptist. Consequently it is a system established by falsehood, carried forward by oppression and arbitrary rule, and is antagonistical to almost every principle of the human soul that becomes Godlike in regeneration.

Happily, the system of unrestricted communion needs none of these dreadful features in its workings. Believers' baptism is regarded as the ordinance of Heaven, and is duly observed. Christian societies are formed upon the principle that the members of them ought to be baptized believers; but, upon coming to the table of the Lord, these societies are not regarded as exclusively the church. In the ordinances of religious worship, the Lord's Supper included, no man and no society is known to the exclusion of the one visible church. There the members of any body bearing the name of a church, holding Christ the head by faith, have liberty to draw near and worship God. This system is harmonious in all its parts, and needs nothing but respect to God's word in its operation.

SECTION V. — THE SPIRIT DISPLAYED IN MAINTAINING CLOSE AND OPEN COMMUNION.

The development of feelings required in maintaining these two systems is entitled to serious consideration.

It can not be supposed for a moment that anything which shall do violence to the purest feelings of Christianity can be according to the mind and will of Jesus concerning our conduct, or, on the other hand, that Christian love and liberality can be exhibited if truth is sacrificed. These are points worthy our most serious reflection, and would lay before us a very wide field of discussion; but one or two remarks shall suffice.

Sound philosophy must be based upon truth. For this reason we are taught to decide that, in instances where we may be led to consider that the precepts and principles of Christianity to be observed by the Christian appear antagonistical to the purest sentiments of humanity, moral refinement, and the spirit of Jesus, we are erroneously informed about those precepts and the required character of a Christian life. Hav-

ing received impressions conflicting with the Christlike feelings of our new-born souls, we conclude that they are not correct; and, upon prayerful examination, sooner or later we have been brought to see that there must be harmony between the religion of Jesus and the best and purest principles of the soul.

Apply the above to the matter of close communion, not forgetting that, though there are many points of religion and Christian duty far above reason, yet there is nothing contrary to reason; proceeding thus, we shall of necessity arrive at the conclusion that there must be something erroneous in the principles of close communion, for they are antagonistical to the Spirit of Christ, to the spirit of his dispensation, and to the spirit of the renewed character, which must in its measure bear affinities to Christ's.

Reason and every faculty of the soul of the Christian, when in a healthful and spiritual state, enjoying the love of God in Christ Jesus, pleads against close communion, and must with every man who is sincere. The restricted baptists tell us continually that it is not of choice that they practise close communion; it is by compulsion and of necessity, to so obey Christ. If this were

a struggle against some of the evil propensities of the wickedness of the heart, and corruptions of the natural mind, Reason would coincide with the statement, and say, 'It must be so.' But as it is declared to be against the Christian feeling of the heart, and sincere love to those who in many instances are eminently endowed with the graces of the Holy Spirit, concerning whom there is not a question for one moment but that they are the children of God by faith in Christ, Reason says, 'There is something wrong in the judgment about this matter.'

The investigation, followed up, will prove that the Lord does not require it. It unchristianizes the Christian; it presents things in the aspect of a kingdom divided against itself, and it divides into ten thousand particles that which Christ declares to be eternally cemented by love.

Could it be possible that Christ could require of his followers, in their strict compliance with one of the things he has enjoined, that they should make it a *sine qua non* with all Christians, so that all the other commands of his lips, and every principle of his gospel, which inculcates love and fellowship among the universal

church, as of one household living together in fraternal bonds, should be violated? *Impossible.* The Lord of heaven does not so confound the laws of his kingdom; such conduct is at variance with every element of his own constitution and nature, and the mere caricature of obedience.

The love of party has led the majority of close-communion baptists to foster the error in their minds, and—with officious interference, they undertake authority which Christ never invested his servants with. To do even what they might think to be the will of the Lord, when he does not require it, is sin; and herein their conduct has a corresponding feature with that of the disciples in their erring zeal, when they saw one casting out devils in the name of Jesus, and they forbade him because he followed not with them; and James and John, when they saw that their Master was not received by others with the feelings which they themselves entertained toward him, inquired of Jesus, "Shall we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elijah did?"—and like Peter, who "stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the

high-priest, and smote off his ear." These severally Jesus reproved. They knew not what manner of spirit they were of. All persecution, even in its mildest form, is an argument against the truthfulness of the position assumed. Truth is not to be defended or sustained by such measures.

The circumstances which gave existence to close communion with baptists were evidently from the peculiarity of the times when it was adopted: that which gave confirmation to it was habit; that which gave continuance to it was prejudice in favor of established practice, believing that what had been observed was according to godliness; and that which gave it the aspect of being according to the mind of God and the command of Christ, was the determination to bring preconceived notions to the word of God, thus endeavoring to make the Scriptures defend denominational distinctions.

The spirit necessary to defend the principles, therefore, can not be of God, inasmuch as it is adverse to that so fully displayed by Jesus—so contrary to every feature of the whole scheme of salvation, and so suicidal to those prominent features of character which the precepts of the

New Testament everywhere demand us to exhibit as disciples of the loving, meek, and lowly Jesus.

In the practice of open communion, no violence is done to the best feelings of humanity. There is no compromise of principle; no conflicting between the feelings which the Holy Spirit has engendered in the new-born soul, or the precepts of Jesus in the Scriptures. It is not with a sorrowful heart that dear friends in Christ must part communion when going to commemorate the dying love of the Saviour for them. It is not such a system as requires that husbands and wives, parents and children, and friends whose hearts, from Christian intercourse and experience, had become knit together like Jonathan's to David, should break asunder when melted by the love of Christ, before the memorials of his death for them.

No, thanks be to God, communion with all that love our Lord Jesus Christ, of whatsoever denomination they may be among Christians, does no injustice to his moral perfections, violates no precept of Christianity, is no conflicting principle with the Spirit of Christ, nor crucifies the pious feelings of the Christian's heart;

but in every point of consideration it bears the impress of the approbation of our one common Father in Christ, of our great Saviour's will and design, and of the Holy Spirit's sealing with his heavenly sanction, by giving, as we have often felt, unutterable pleasure and sacredness in such obedience.

SECTION VI. — THE DESTINED INFLUENCE OF CLOSE AND OPEN COMMUNION.

The truthfulness of the position of either restricted or open communion will have much to do with their future influence; and as assuredly as they are fairly examined by the word of God, so surely will close communion wane, and unrestricted communion shine forth in its glory. The opposition which may arise from long-cherished notions may retard in some degree a rapid onward course at the first; but as partisans fall off, those who take their places will think for themselves, and the voice of Truth and Consistency must be heard.

In the rising generation, education is doing something more for the people; and were it for no other reason than that close communion crip-

ples freedom of thought, and narrows social intercourse, it will undergo a calm and close examination, and when once submitted to this, nothing will be required on the part of those who have descried the baseless character of the superstructure, but to shake it with truthful argument, that the people may see its weakness. But, independently of such advocacy, soon they will see the unauthorized assumption of the defenders of close communion, and reject the fallacy.

In looking around upon the restricted-baptist community, it is fair to ask whether, in maintaining its numerical strength, the means used to do so are legitimate Christian means. The truthful answer must be, '*They are not.*' Artificial means are used, and the peculiar sentiments of close communion presented under false lights; converts are made to the profession of Christianity and close-communion views, where in the large majority of cases there is neither religion for the one, nor enlightenment to discern the truth of the other. It is in this way the system is now maintained. With the more enlightened, the influence of association and habit, without looking particularly at the just-

ness of the principle, has directed them; but few have honestly investigated the matter but what have seen that there is no truth for the pretensions set up.

Where a liberal education has been given to baptist families, we have a right to look, to see the way in which they regard the matter. We have taken a survey of this aspect in relation to the system, and it is one which demands the very serious attention of all. While we see the additions to close churches mostly made by strangers brought in from the world, and mostly uneducated, we see the respectable families of old standards of the denomination on every hand forsaking the congregations where early habits would have seemed to have held them, to give in their influence and strength to other denominations. The reason of this is but too manifest: though they have not ventured fully to examine the foundation of their parents' creed by the word of God, they have seen that there is something defective, and that the narrow system, the coercive measures, the exclusiveness to which it compels, can not be right; they try to think that believers' baptism by immersion, having as appendages such unlovely principles, is some-

how or other contrary to the gospel, and they become pedobaptists, and will eventually train their children in the same way.

It may be seen that restricted-baptist congregations every year become less influential. The system is only suited for enthralled minds: noble, charitable, and enlightened souls, can not long endure it; and as it comes into fair contact with open communion, it will decline into a shadow. Upon this ground we have no doubt as to what must be the result among an educated and free people where the true principles of the two systems are fairly developed.

The history of the English baptists is a point at hand fully elucidating these remarks. False notions have been entertained upon this matter by American baptists, and altogether unfounded assertions have been made respecting the denomination in England by some who have written in favor of restricted practice. We hope they did it in ignorance of the facts, but it is certain that they obtained their information from untruthful men, be they who they may. It is therefore generally considered that the baptist denomination in England is destroyed by the principle of open communion, and that baptists

are so ashamed of their ordinance as to adopt secresy and scheme every way to practise it: whereas, nothing could be more false.

As in England, so everywhere else, close communion is destined to work itself out, because it has no scriptural foundation. Some time prior to the days of Robert Hall, there began to be more liberality displayed by the English government toward dissenters generally, and in proportion they became more educated, and took their stand in society; but just in proportion did the baptist denomination wane, till at last there were but few enlightened men to join the ranks of baptists; and had their societies continued close till this day, the denomination now perhaps would have been in its expiring throes. The few close societies now remaining are in a wretched plight indeed, and scarcely an educated man among them.

But, in the providence of God, Robert Hall and many other such men were raised up, who examined the subject of close communion, and declared it—as Dr. Carson wrote to the church in New York—"*the wisdom of men, and God made foolish this wisdom.*" Through the influence of these eminent scholars and di-

vines, the whole system was reviewed, and close communion began to vanish away. In proportion as churches became in favor of open communion, so they increased with men of godliness and talent, till at length the baptist denomination in England can lift up its head in the gate of learning; piety, influence, and wealth, with all other denominations.

The state of the baptist denomination as open communion, in England, is most flourishing; the houses of worship are thronged; the numerical strength has been and is rapidly on the increase, without any resort to excitement or unscriptural means to accomplish it. Nobles, members of parliament, gentlemen, and wealthy merchants, with refined citizens spiritually enlightened, are to be found in the baptist denomination; and, under God, it is to be attributed to the way in which Christ's commands are honored and his ordinances observed, without assuming authority, or lording it over God's heritage.

Restricted communion must die out sooner or later, throughout the civilized world, and open communion must progress. By this, multitudes like the drops of morning dew shall be won to embrace believers' baptism by immersion, where

close communion and coercion can do no other than drive from its borders.

SECTION VII. — CLOSING APPEAL.

We have now to draw to a close our proposed review of "Christian Ordinances and Ecclesiastical Observances." Throughout this review it must be seen that the subjects demanded a more lengthened discussion; the difficulty has been to crowd in prominent ideas which claimed notice.

We presume no man nor set of men can scripturally overthrow the position we have taken, viz., that "*restricted communion among baptists is antiscriptural.*" If any think they can fairly controvert it by the word of God, let them make the attempt: *certain we are that, before they can do it, they must falsify the New Testament.*

Many important topics we have been compelled to omit, and perhaps some which may have been thought more powerful in sustaining our position than those advanced. Be this as it may, we are so far satisfied that, like the walls of Jericho of old, our ram's-horn blasts have, so far as the truth of the sentiment is concerned, brought down the towering walls of restricted

communion flat to the ground. *God grant that multitudes may go up and take the city!*

Baptist ministers! we call to you. There is a glorious mission for you to fulfil, if you do but regard it, lay it to heart, and follow it with holy zeal. The time is now when you can take the lead, and bring in the delightful train nearly the whole constituency of the baptist churches; you will be regarded as the patrons of the denomination—loved and revered by a people who will eventually bless you, as, under God, being their leaders from error and bigotry.

We ask of you to re-examine all that has been written in defence of close communion, and you will find that every one who has gone into the conflict has, in some way or other, smitten down his comrade with his own weapon of defence. The grounds upon which close communion is sought to be established are as variable as the winds: first it is this, then that, then something else. Once think seriously of what has been put forth in the defence of your position, and you will feel that you are on a bed of quicksands; and if you do not escape before the tide of public opinion acts upon them, you will go down, and your notions perish.

You must not think that an enlightened people, advancing in arts and sciences, refinement, and social intercourse, will not look also at their religious principles and weigh them as they will do others; though they may be the last to be taken up, they will certainly have their day for close scrutiny, and that day has begun. Be, therefore, the leaders in this work; and do not let the opportunity pass you while you are dreaming of peace and safety, for the foundation of the error is shaking, and the superstructure must soon fall.

The baptist denomination is destined to win and not coerce to the opinions which are scriptural, and from God. By taking the rightful position, according to godliness, to bring others to the unity, not only of faith, but of practice, baptists will be successful. In the present position, baptists have been fighting against their own interests; they have driven and scattered the best of their members among other denominations. The educated rising generation have in many instances cast aside the faith and practice of their fathers, and neglected the societies in which they were early trained to worship. But when the close barriers shall be pulled down, which have been raised by men of super-

stitious feelings, then God will smile upon the baptist denomination, and those trained to worship in its courts will love to continue there.

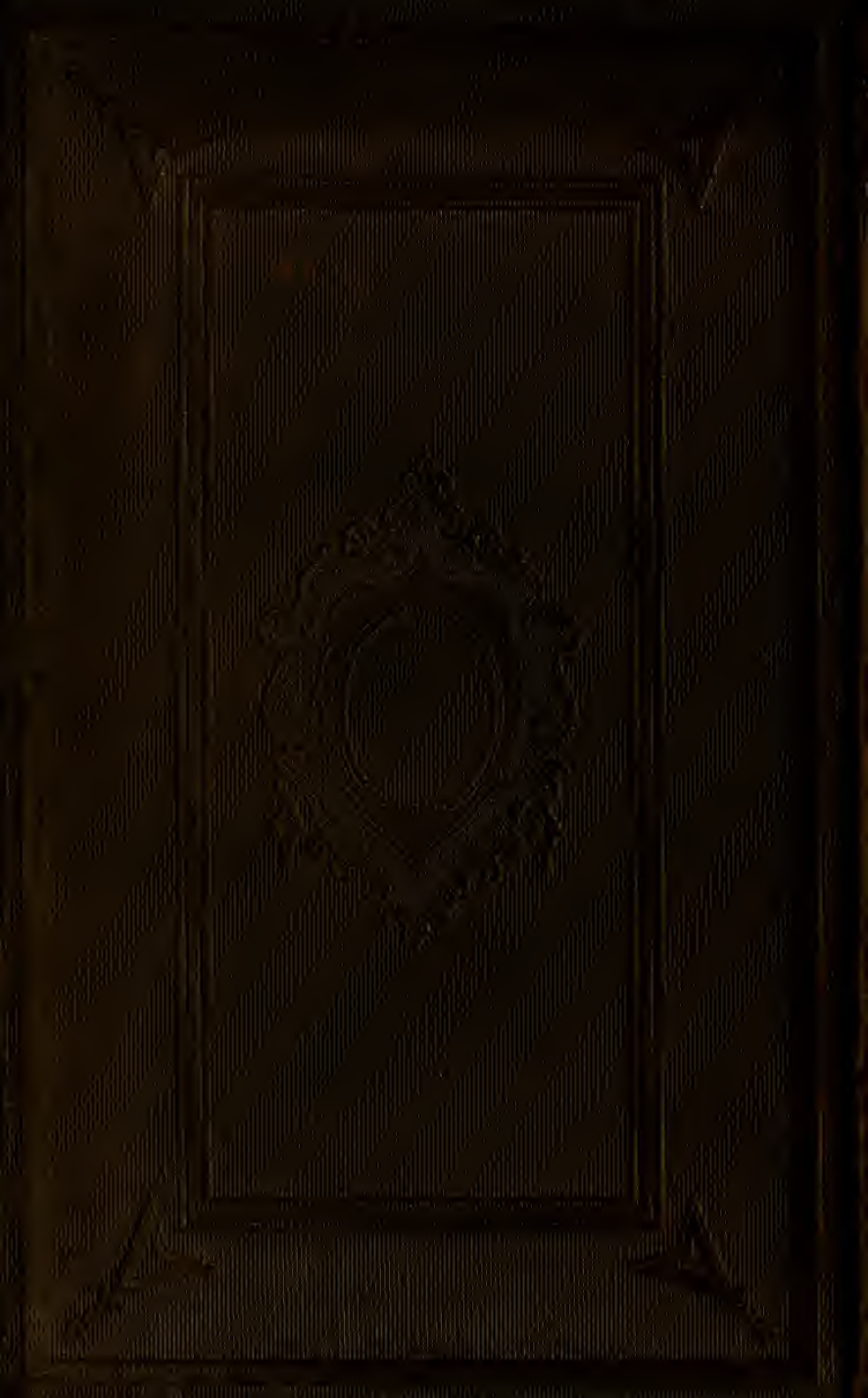
Baptist Christians of the laity! we call upon you to reconsider the whole ground of your restricted principle. We have the greatest confidence that when, with moral courage, and prayerful consideration, you shall lay down previously-conceived notions, and compare them with the spirit of the New Testament, you will be rightly guided into truth. We can suppose that many have the chains of superstition so riveted to them, that they will be only indignant at the idea that we should suppose that their position is doubtful; but be it so—we can exercise Christian forbearance, and pray for their release. But there are others of you, who have long felt that something must be radically wrong in the system: its operation has betrayed it to your minds, and you are ready to enter upon a Christian and candid examination. *God will bless you in it.*

Particularly do we look to you who are now entering upon the path of life for yourselves, and who are seriously inclined. You, for the most part, have the advantage in the investiga-

tion of any subject; you are prepared to discover where error may be wrapped up in an unsuspected covering. May you with firm grasp and zealous resolution bring it forth and denounce it!

Young, intelligent Christians! you, with the rising generation, are our hope, under Divine blessing, to free the baptists from the long train of evils consequent on unenlightened prejudice. You want to feel that, in your sincere obedience to the Lord Jesus, you may fraternize with all that love him; you want to know that, in your family associations, your baptist views are not necessary barriers to your worshipping with those who differ with you in those particulars, or to their communing with you at the Lord's table: you have never seen how such separation from sincere Christians could harmonize with the principles of the New Testament; but you have been told that such was gospel order; you have been told that to infringe upon it was a sin which the denomination would visit with the severest discipline. We tell you, with the word of God in our hands, it is no sin, but highly commendable, and that it is in the spirit of and in accordance with the principles of Christ's requirements.

We have now discharged, in faithfulness and

affection, a duty which conscience and the providence of God laid us under to our Christian brethren. We knew it could not be undertaken but at the penalty of the displeasure and opposition of those who have cherished their worldly systems in violation of almost every principle of Christianity; but this was secondary, and not worth consideration in the contemplation of the question, '*Shall the voice of Truth be heard?*' None have ever stood for the defence of the principles of the New Testament but what have suffered much opposition and persecution from zealots who have been foremost in professing to adhere to what is right and according to godliness. To those who oppose themselves to what we have said, the address of Paul to the erring Galatians may not be inapplicable: "Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" We now throw upon the baptists generally who advocate close communion the responsibility of how they regard this matter. We offer many prayers for them, because we are assured that their rejection of these truthful positions God will require at their hands.

THE END.